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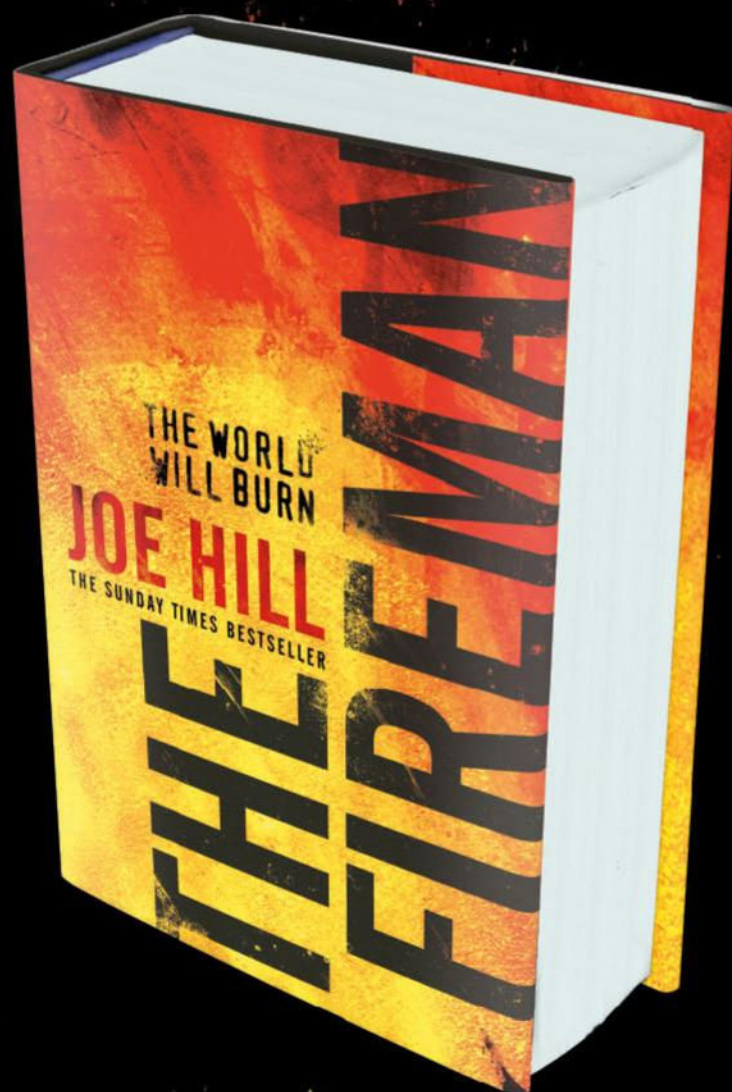


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Future Publishing, Quay House,
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EDITORIAL

Editor: Will Salmon

Art Editors: Graham Dalzell, Andrew McGregor

Production Editors: Rhian Drinkwater,
Russell Lewin, Alex Summersby

EDITORIAL CONTRIBUTORS

Penny Archer, Sam Ashurst, Ian Berriman, Louise Blain,
Bryan Cairns, Sarah Dobbs, Jordan Farley, Adam Gasson, Jamie
Graham, Miles Hamer, Simon Hooper, Stephen Jewell, Philip
Kemp, Joseph McCabe, Steve O'Brien, Dom Reeseigh-Lincoln,
Alasdair Stuart, Ben Tyrer, Josh Winning

WITH SPECIAL THANKS TO

Dale Barnett, Zoe Flower, Ollie Charles, Tom Finney, Arelis Ruiz
Arias, Tori Lowe and all at Lionsgate, Sean Brosnan, Alma Bogdan-
Turner, Marek Steven, Naomi Meanwell, Julia Bocanera, Drew
Jerrison, Adam Nevill, Hannah Joyce, Fetch Publicity, Arrow,
88 Films, Sarah Gillespie, Rozzie Inge, SFX, Total Film, Laura
Driffield, Holly McIntosh, Dave Bradley, Greg Day, Alan Jones, Ian
Rattray and all at Horror Channel FrightFest

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Stranger Things love, late-night Skype calls to Vancouver,
A Moon Shaped Pool and unbelievable amounts of
green tea (we're healthy, like)

ADVERTISING

Commercial Sales Director Clare Dove
Advertising Director Lara Jaggon
Advertising Manager Michael Pyatt
Advertising Director Steven Pyatt Tel 01225 687713

MARKETING

Direct Marketing Manager Jemima Crow
Marketing Manager Kristianne Stanton

CIRCULATION & LICENSING

Trade Marketing Manager Michelle Brock
Tel 020 7429 3683, michelle.brock@seymour.co.uk
International Director Matt Ellis
Tel +44 (0)1225 442244

PRODUCTION AND DISTRIBUTION

Production controllers Nola Cokely, Vivienne Turner
Head of production, UK and US Mark Constance

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MANAGEMENT

Group Editor-in-Chief Jane Crowther
Group Art Director Graham Dalzell
Editorial Director Paul Newman
Managing Director, Magazines Division Joe McEvoy

Email addresses (apart from Michelle Brock) are
firstname.lastname@futurenet.com



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Chief executive Zillah Byng-Thorne
Non-executive chairman Peter Allen
Chief financial officer Penny Larkin-Brand
Tel +44 (0)207 042 4000 (London)
+44 (0)1225 442 244 (Bath)

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elcome to the very first issue of *Horrorville*! I know
what you're thinking (no, not "waaaaaargh,
Stranger Things!"), though that too, obviously) –
why start a horror magazine, and why now?

Horrorville came out of a desire to make a horror
magazine that we hadn't really seen before, one that
does for the genre what our sister title *SFX* does for science fiction
– that is, treat it with respect, be welcoming and accessible to all,
and have a lot of fun along the way. We wanted to make a modern
magazine, one that celebrates the genre's rich past, but is more
focused on the present and future.

So, in this first issue you'll find some retrospective stuff: a poll
of our favourite scary movies (well, some of them), for instance,
but mostly you'll find features on *new* films and interviews with
exciting modern directors like Can Evrenol, Peter Strickland, Sean
Brosnan and Adam Wingard. We're also keen to represent the
genre as a whole, and include books and TV shows. It's all horror.

This genre is too often seen as a lesser sibling of science fiction
and fantasy. It's not. Horror is a powerful, funny, moving, silly,
thrilling, transcendent, and, of course, scary genre that has given
birth to most of my favourite movies (*The Wicker Man*, *Twin Peaks:
Fire Walk With Me* and *The Blair Witch Project* among many more).
We want to do it justice. I hope that you think we have, and stick
with us as we build on this first issue and make a quarterly
magazine that's a home for all horror fans. Our next issue is out
on 1 November. I hope you'll join us again then.

Will

Will Salmon, Editor



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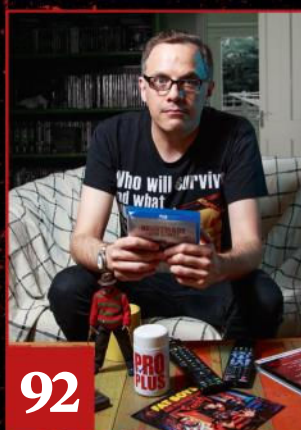
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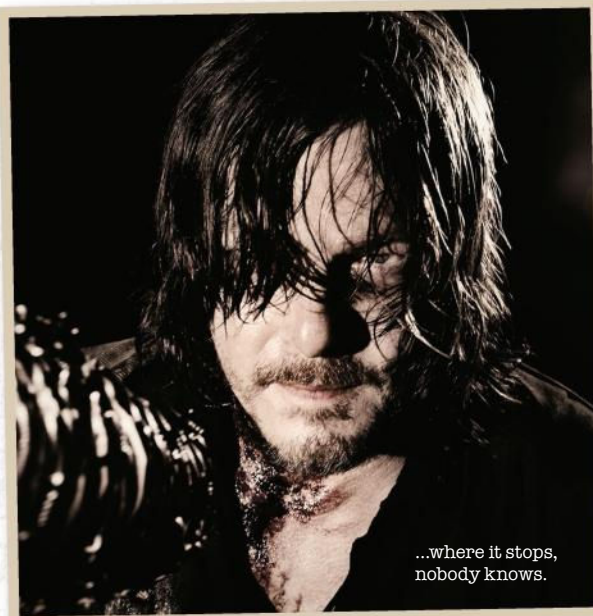
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Spin, spin, spin the wheel of doom...



...where it stops, nobody knows.

SMACK DOWN

Season seven of *The Walking Dead* is set to deliver a body blow to Rick's group of survivors...

Season seven of AMC's *The Walking Dead* will explode back onto television screens this October, finally putting fans' burning curiosity at ease following season six's tense finale. Jeffrey Dean Morgan's villainous Negan and his infamous baseball bat Lucille have been confirmed as hitting off the series with the resolution to "Last Day On Earth"'s powerful (and also wildly infuriating) cliffhanger.

According to *The Hollywood Reporter*, the production team have filmed no less than 11 different potential death scenes, to stop potential spoiler leakage before transmission.

Regarding the controversial skull-crushing climax, Andrew Lincoln had this to say at their recent Comic-Con panel: "It's a really shitty start to the season, but hang in there, guys. I know you will because I think we're headed towards one of the biggest showdowns we've had on this show since Terminus. So hang in there with us!"

Recently released publicity stills have confirmed the gloomy savagery in store for the

plucky survivors, with Morgan, Carol, and Jesus all looking as grim and resolutely miserable as you might well expect them to this far into a zombie apocalypse. Notably, none of the characters at the end of Negan's deadly attack feature, even Rick Grimes himself, leading to fevered speculation that they might do what Robert Kirkman has been teasing for years and kill off the show's lead for good.

UNSTOPPABLE FORCE


Talking to *Entertainment Weekly*, Jeffrey Dean Morgan is clearly relishing the fearsome force and notoriety of his nefarious character. When pushed for a hypothetical battle between him and David Morrissey's sadistic Governor, he claims no contest. "It's not even close. I mean, I love David Morrissey, but he wouldn't stand a chance. I'd put Negan up against anybody. He's super smart and there's no filter, no fear."

With the full three-minute season seven Fox trailer dropping, also making a big introduction is Khary Payton as Ezekiel, self-proclaimed king of, well, the Kingdom. The dreadlock-sporting ruler is also bringing

with him his pet pal Shiva, a fully grown female tiger. Payton has form on both comic book adaptations and big cats, having provided voiceover work in the animated *Teen Titans* and *Lion King* spin-off *The Lion Guard*.

As head of the nearby mysterious community the Kingdom, a bloody battle brewing between them and the Saviors looks inevitable, with whoever survives Negan's frenzied attack being forced to choose sides sharpish. As always with *The Walking Dead*, uneasy alliances provide the backbone to all the rotting meat of the action.

Of which, the trailer promises plenty of gruesome walker moments, lest anyone forget that this is a zombie show. Highlights include what looks like a garden hoe thrust through a cadaver's face, some fancy stunt work involving a 180° flip onto the roof of a speeding car, and an undead horde clawing their way through sand.

Episode one debuts in the UK one night after US transmission on Monday 24 October on Fox. Excited yet? As Negan might say, we're pissing our pants... 

CARPENTER RETURNS TO HALLOWEEN

Original director on board to executive produce the next movie

An announcement has finally been made that *Halloween* fans have been waiting for since Rob Zombie's underperforming 2009 sequel – Michael Myers is returning. And, most excitingly, original director, co-writer, and composer John Carpenter is on board, executive producing the 10th sequel to the genre-defining 1978 slasher.

Along with Malek Akkad – son of original series producer Moustapha – the film is being produced by Blumhouse Productions, responsible for such genre mega-successes as *Insidious*, *The Visit*, and the *Paranormal Activity* series. Announced through series website *halloweenmovies.com*, John Carpenter remarked, “38 years after the original *Halloween* I’m going to try and make the tenth sequel the scariest of all.”

Starring the then-unknown Jamie Lee Curtis as babysitter Laurie Strode and Donald Pleasance as psychiatrist Dr Sam Loomis, the 1978 original was a critical and financial hit that kick-started the slasher



boom of the early 1980s. A staggering seven sequels followed (of increasingly variable quality) before rocker Rob Zombie made a pair of unloved remakes (though the second film has its defenders – see page 114). It’s unclear at this stage if this new film will be a legitimate sequel to *Halloween: Resurrection* or reboot the original series’

increasingly convoluted chronology.

Jason Blum of Blumhouse Productions said, “*Halloween* is one of those milestone films that inspired everyone at our company to get into the world of scary movies. The great Malek Akkad and John Carpenter have a special place in the hearts of all genre fans and we are so excited that Miramax brought us together. We cannot wait to find and collaborate with the right filmmaker to give *Halloween* fans the movie they deserve.”

With a director yet to be confirmed, production will likely start once Carpenter’s current musical tour has wound up towards the end of this year. 🍬

“38 YEARS AFTER THE ORIGINAL I’M GOING TO MAKE THIS THE SCARIEST OF ALL”

LESTAT BITES BACK

The arrogant immortal returns for a 12th round of bloodletting

Anne Rice’s most famous literary creation, vampire Prince Lestat de Lioncourt, is set to return once again later this year. *Prince Lestat And The Realms of Atlantis*, which is due to be published November 29th, was announced via the author’s Facebook fan page. 12th in *The Vampire Chronicles* series and a direct sequel to 2014’s *Prince Lestat*, this time around the pointy-toothed antihero faces off against an evil entity attempting to make off with his undead soul.

According to Rice, the book will be, “A hypnotic tale of a great sea power of ancient times; a mysterious heaven on earth situated on a boundless

continent – and of how and why, and in what manner and with what far-reaching purpose, this force came to build and rule the great legendary empire of centuries ago that thrived in the Atlantic Ocean”.

Explaining the fantastical setting, she wrote, “I’ve been dying to get my vision of Atlantis into the public realm for years... I want you to know this novel does indeed offer a full blown vision of Atlantis, as well as being a full dress Lestat and the vampires novel. It turned out for me to be a marriage of themes that could have been made in heaven.”

2003’s *Blood Chronicle* was originally intended to end *The Vampire Chronicles* but in 2014 Rice announced a further five books in the bestselling series, starting with *Prince Lestat*.

In other news, Universal Pictures are due to start production on another adaptation of *Interview With The Vampire*, written and directed by Josh Boone (*The Fault In Our Stars*). Fingers crossed that Rice will be rather happier about whoever is cast this time than she was when Tom Cruise wore the stick-on fangs back in 1994. 🍬



SHALLOW CUTS

Even Stranger Things?

Show of the moment *Stranger Things* is already gearing up for a second round, with creators the Duffer Brothers stating that the next run of 80’s-styled monster mash will be set a year after the finale, due to the young actors’ ageing.

Pumpkinhead re-carved

Stan Winston’s 1988 cult creature feature *Pumpkinhead* is heading for a remake, helmed by Saw executive producer Peter Block. Following three direct-to-video sequels and two Syfy television movies, Block has obtained the rights to the original revenge schlocker with a view to kick-starting afresh the devilish franchise.

Slasher slashed?

Despite warm reviews and buoyant ratings, *Slasher* – the gory whodunnit pastiche – is still awaiting renewal. Showrunner Aaron Martin has hinted a second season would focus on all new characters, killer and plot, American Horror Story style.

Insidious 4

The third sequel in the spooksome series is set for an October 20th release, just in time for *Halloween*, with Adam Robitel taking over directorial reigns. A relative newcomer, Robitel previously helmed found footage horror *The Taking of Deborah Logan* and co-wrote *Paranormal Activity: Ghost Dimension*.



EVIL DEAD GOES HOME

In his second year on TV, Bruce Campbell's Ash returns to his roots

A BIT HANDY

Ash is up for more rib-tickling death and destruction this year.

After 35 years of battling Deadites, primitive screwheads, and Kandarian Demons, Ashley Williams may have finally met his match. For in the second season of TV's *Ash Vs Evil Dead*, the lunkheaded horror hero at long last confronts...his dad. As played by the *Six Million Dollar Man* himself, actor Lee Majors, the father-son reunion promises to be genre's most awkwardly memorable since that of *Indiana Jones And The Last Crusade*.

"Would you like to have Lee Majors play your father?" producer-star Bruce Campbell asks when he speaks with us at the Television Critics Association's annual Summer Press Tour in Los Angeles. "Hell yes you would. It was a great moment. Out of all the miserable moments that actors suffer throughout their professional lives, that was not one of them. That was one of those wonderful moments where you go, 'Oh, now I know why I'm in this stupid business.' Because every so often you can have fun things like that where you get to work with someone you grew up with. It's a dream come true."

"You'll see where Ash gets a lot of his traits," says the 77-year-old Majors of his character. "Being so raunchy and a woman-chaser and all that good stuff. Supposedly [that] came from me. But our confrontation at first is very... I blame him for the death of my daughter, and I never forgave


him. I had to lose my business because of him. Nobody wanted to do business with the father of 'Ashy Slashy', so I was like a hermit. Then he shows up. I don't want any part of him. There's a little animosity at first."

"Then later," he teases, "in certain episodes, it gets a little more competitive. Maybe with a woman, maybe with a sports activity or something..."

Majors also promises references to *Six Million Dollar Man*, especially in regards to Ash's own "enhancements".

"That hand," he laughs. "I say, 'It looks like a piece of crap made in China!' Then 'What are you doing, chasing Bigfoot?' You know those kinds of lines. The fans will get it, if they were fans of the show. It just adds a little bit of dimension. But I was very pleased to join the cast. Everybody gels so well, and Bruce is a very underrated actor. He's so brilliant at comedy, and Lucy [Lawless] and all the rest of them are all so good."

Campbell is well aware of the challenge he, his costmates and his fellow *Evil Dead* producers, Rob Tapert and Sam Raimi, have set for themselves. In bringing Ash back for the first time since *Army Of Darkness*, the trio defied expectations last year by successfully continuing, on television, a film storyline they'd left behind over two decades ago.

"Season one," says Campbell, "was 'Holy crap, are people going to like it?' Season two is like, 'Oh geez, they like it. We're screwed.' Because now you got to see if you can keep 'em liking it." 

"SEASON TWO IS LIKE, 'OH GEEZ, THEY LIKE IT. WE'RE SCREWED'"



RAY SANTIAGO

Ash Vs Evil Dead's plucky ValueStop employee Pablo on working with Bruce, fandom and season two...

HV Do you enjoy working with the living legend that is Bruce Campbell?

RS Absolutely. My relationship with Bruce definitely parallels Pablo's relationship with Ash. I try to learn as much as possible from Bruce, because Bruce is an icon. I would be lucky to have a career with such longevity as he has. I respect him as an actor the way Pablo respects him as a Deadite hunter. He takes really good care of us. Bruce and the team would organise things together, and it helped. Because when you're isolated in a different country the people you work with become your family.

HV How was San Diego Comic-Con this year?

RS It was unreal. To have my first interaction with a cosplay Pablo was crazy. And you know, I, like Pablo, can be very emotional. I've worked really hard to get to where I'm at and I was sitting on a panel and signing autographs. I had to sort of stop myself from getting overwhelmed because it felt like something I had always wanted and I didn't think I would get to. I didn't think it would come in this form. To see the reaction of the fans was a really nice gift. They didn't have to embrace it. Horror fans are very loyal and they'll slaughter you if they do not like what you're putting out there.

HV What do you admire the most about Pablo?


RS What I like about him is he has the ability to look beyond people's flaws and see the hero in everyone. He sees the hero in everybody else but he doesn't see it in himself. That's what I love about him. As an actor, I keep thinking, "What is wrong with this dude? Why is he not seeing that Ash is an

idiot?" How many times are we going to put him in a situation where he's like, "No, Ash, you can do it! You're the one! You're the answer!" But he's just so optimistic and he helps support the audience and get them to like Ash. They're like, "Oh, he believes in him now. He cares about him."

HV How would you describe Pablo's relationship with Kelly (Dana DeLorenzo)?

RS We're like a weird family. Ash is like my dad. Ruby (Lucy Lawless) is like the awful wicked step-mum. And Kelly's like the hot step-sister that you kind of want to hook up with. Pablo wants to save the world, stay alive and get the girl. He'll die trying – I just hope not literally. Dana and I have been through this whole journey, side-by-side. Any time anything great happens or anything bad happens, I can look to the left or look to the right and I can see that she's there and we have each other's back.

HV How will things change for season two?

RS You'll see that Ash has changed. We have changed him. Because that's the most important thing with any series, that the characters change. Yes, we're making a cult comedy horror show, and it's silly and we're not taking ourselves too seriously, but you want to see stories unfold. In season two, you'll see that Ash has changed and he's invested in this weird family that he's created. Whether he's a hero or not, he needs them, because if not for them, he'd just be alone in this world. I like that we are all this weird family that we've created. 

Ash Vs Evil Dead is out on DVD on 19 September, from Twentieth Century Fox Home Entertainment.





ABOVE

Reportedly, Robin Hardy originally wanted Michael York to play Sgt. Howie, and Christopher Lee offered the role to Peter Cushing. How different would the movie have been with one of these two in the role instead of Edward Woodward?

ROBIN HARDY 1929-2016

On 1 July, while we were producing this issue, Robin Hardy passed away at the age of 86. Will Salmon pays tribute

Although Robin Hardy directed only three films in his life, his place in horror's hall of fame has long been assured thanks to his first and finest picture – 1973's *The Wicker Man*. Over the last 43 years the eerie British classic has risen to become the UK's best-loved horror movie, and it's easy to see why. Mixing sex, paganism and ritual sacrifice with folk music and a gleeful Christopher Lee, the deliriously weird film still has the power to chill.

Born on 2 October 1929, Robin St. Clair Rimington Hardy studied art in Paris before going to work for the famous National Film Board Of Canada. He spent time in the States making educational TV programmes for PBS before eventually returning to Britain in the 1960s, where he set up a film production company, Hardy, Shaffer & Associates, with Anthony Shaffer – who would later pen the screenplay for *The Wicker Man*.

Hardy's association with the movie that would make his name came after a health scare: he was convalescing

following a heart attack when Shaffer, producer Peter Snell and Christopher Lee brought him the idea. Loosely based on David Pinner's deeply peculiar (but for *Wicker* fans worthwhile) novel *Ritual*, the horror movie that Hardy and Shaffer set to work on creating would ponder matters of faith, sexuality and the perils of devout belief in distant gods, both pagan and Christian.

Filming began in the autumn of 1972 – and a bleak, blustery autumn it was, too, the chilly locations not entirely matching the verdant tone of an island named Summerisle. Still, thanks to a few fake trees and some stuck-on blossom, the Scottish locations came memorably to life. Indeed, you could make a convincing argument that a good deal of *The Wicker Man*'s strange appeal lies in the sense of wrongness that permeates everything in the film, from the often upbeat soundtrack to the peculiar casting of mime artist Lindsay Kemp as a barman and the hotchpotch of film stocks that came to characterise the later versions of the movie.



The Wicker Man was filmed in seven weeks and a cut was assembled that ran to 99 minutes. Unfortunately, it then faced a rocky road to actually being seen. British Lion had been taken over by EMI, and none of the new staff seemed especially keen on a strange little movie where the Christian copper was less sympathetic than the pagan army he opposed. *The Wicker Man* eventually made its way to audiences as part of a double bill with *Don't Look Now*, albeit reduced in its running time to just 87 minutes, with several vital scenes excised.

DIRECTOR'S CUTS

Hardy moved back to the States. He maintained a keen interest in the fate of his movie, however, and in 1976 began looking into assembling a longer cut of his film. With the help of distribution company Abraxas, who had bought the rights cheaply, Hardy began searching for missing footage, and a 95 minute version was made, while the longer 99 minute version found a home video release in the States. All three versions are available on the current Blu-ray release. He also penned a rather good novelisation of the film in 1978 – and would later write two other novels, *The Education Of Don Juan* and *Cowboys For Christ*.

Hardy didn't helm another picture until 1986, when he wrote and directed *The Fantastist*, a solid but little-seen serial killer thriller, based on Patrick McGinley's novel *Goosefoot*. Three years later he penned the script for *Zelda*

"PART OF ITS STRANGE APPEAL LIES IN THE SENSE OF WRONGNESS THAT PERMEATES IT"

Barron's Crete-set *Forbidden Sun* (also known as *The Bull Dance*), but that film fared equally poorly.

His third, and final, movie was an adaptation of his own novel *Cowboys For Christ*. *The Wicker Tree*, released in 2011, met a muted critical reception and had only a tiny cinematic release, but is not without its charms. A thematic (rather than direct) sequel, it follows a pair of American missionaries who attempt to bring the word of God to the people of a small Scottish village, Tressock. Christopher Lee again plays a part – albeit sadly a reduced role, because of ill health – and the film makes a fair attempt at recapturing some of *The Wicker Man*'s old magic, while never eclipsing it. Hardy intended to wrap up the trilogy with *The Wrath Of The Gods*, which he was working on until his death.

So, only one film generally considered to be of note. But what a film! *The Wicker Man* is a staggering achievement that casts a long shadow over British film. And while many people played their part in bringing it to screen, it was Hardy who kept the flame burning on his cult phenomenon for nearly 50 years. 🍷

ABOVE

Christopher Lee, who reportedly turned down any fee for appearing in the movie, later declared playing Lord Summerisle to have been one of his greatest roles.

UNLUCKY FOR SOME...

Everyone's favourite psychopathic hockey fan back for 13th time

Crystal Lake's finest, Jason Voorhees, is due to dust off his hockey mask once more, as pre-production mounts for a brand new *Friday The 13th* movie, due for release next year. The 13th film in the series (oh, the marketing team are going to have a field day with that...) will be produced by Platinum Dunes, the company behind 2009's lukewarm false start. It promises to break away from both the reboot and the original series by establishing an entirely new continuity. A director has yet to be confirmed, but it's known that *The Last Witch Hunter*'s Breck Eisner is currently in talks about taking on the film.

Like 2003's *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, this new slice of camp-based mayhem will be a period piece, set in the late 1970s and early '80s. It's also, perhaps surprisingly, going to be more of a character study than fans of the franchise might be expecting, dealing with Jason's upbringing. Just don't mention the "O" word...

"Origin isn't really the right word for this movie," producer Brad Fuller explained to *iHorror*. "The word 'origin' got out and everyone's calling it an origin film now, but that isn't exactly the direction we're taking. It's more of an alternate world that we're creating for Jason



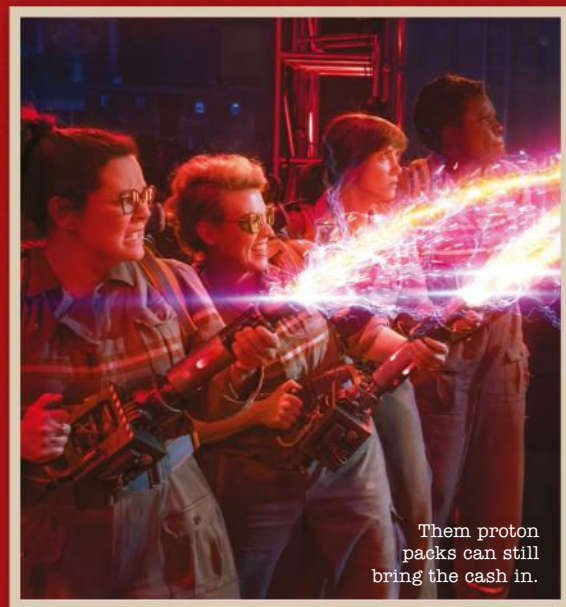
Not converting to pacifism just yet.

– an alternate space, alternate reality – in this film... We went down the origin route with the second *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* film. I think when you go too deep into a character's origin, the character stops being scary."

How soon we'll see the masked marauder back in cinemas remains to be seen. Given that production is only just starting, the original intended release date of January Friday 13th 2017 now seems unlikely.

BOX OFFICE BUSTED!

Success of new *Ghostbusters* film paves way for further adventures



Them proton packs can still bring the cash in.

The cinema-going public ain't afraid of no reboots – at least if the box office for Paul Feig's *Ghostbusters* is anything to go by. The supernatural comedy experienced a successful opening weekend and, in just two weeks, turned profit on its \$144 million USD budget (£108 million), signalling the strong likelihood of a sequel. Sony worldwide president of distribution Rory Bruer certainly thinks so, telling *The Wrap*, "There's no doubt in my mind it will happen."

He added, "The *Ghostbusters* world is alive and well. I expect *Ghostbusters* to become an important brand and franchise." Whether marketing puff or genuine confidence remains to be seen, but there's no denying that the movie has found an audience.

The response to the film has been mostly warm from fans and critics, though the remake hasn't been without controversy, with some "fans" taking to trolling and racially slurring star Leslie Jones on Twitter.

Meanwhile, director of the 1984 original and current reboot producer Ivan Reitman has revealed further details to *Vulture* about the second sequel that never was. Most interesting is confirmation that the film would have seen Bill Murray's Peter Venkman die in the first scene, with his son Oscar taking a lead role. "It was a father-son story, with [Venkman] as a ghost," says Reitman, who also confirmed that the film was almost ready to shoot, when Egon Spengler actor Harold Ramis was taken ill. "The studio green-lit it. Everything was ready to go... and in the midst of that Harold got really sick." 🍷

SHALLOW CUTS

Hellraiser: Judgment

As the remake appears stuck, somewhat ironically, in development hell, production is winding up on ninth sequel *Hellraiser: Judgment*, starring *A Nightmare On Elm Street*'s Nancy, Heather Langenkamp, with Paul T Taylor taking over the role of Pinhead. The S&M slaughter is slated to arrive early 2017.

Outlast 2 Delayed

Highly-anticipated videogame sequel *Outlast 2* has been pushed back to early 2017, missing its original autumn release date. Studio Red Barrels has said that the Arizona desert-set survival horror will benefit from further testing and added that it would, "Scare the crap out of you". Yikes.

Death Note Casts Dafoe

Crag-faced character actor Willem Dafoe is lending his voice to the forthcoming live-action adaptation of the manga classic *Death Note*. In the upcoming Netflix exclusive from *Blair Witch* director Adam Wingard, Dafoe will voice the apple-munching spirit Ryuk, who drops the titular death-serving notebook.

Franco to get to tha choppa?

James Franco is in talks to play the improbably-named Quinn McKenna in Shane Black's upcoming action-horror sequel, *The Predator*.

What's on...

The pick of the best things to do over the next three months

August

Horror Channel FrightFest

What Event

Forget incinerating sausages this bank holiday weekend and instead make the trek to Shepherd's Bush for what Guillermo del Toro describes as "The Woodstock of Horror". Three screens, five days and more than 60 films of blood-soaked burgeoning talent, including many of the films featured in this issue.

Where Vue Cinema West, 12 Shepherd's Bush Green, London

When 25 - 29 August

Resident Evil 4

What Videogame

Consistently hailed as a masterpiece of the medium, the third sequel in the acclaimed ongoing zombie survival series is finally making its digital way to current-gen consoles. Grab a pad and face down your undead foes.

Where PS Store, Xbox Store

When 30 August

Evils Of The Night

What Blu-ray/DVD

While the poster screams "Aliens in search of TEENAGE BLOOD!" most of the

actors are probably now wondering how to lose it from their IMDB page. This low-budget culty slice of titillating grindhouse is given the prestigious Vinegar Syndrome treatment.

Where Vinegar Syndrome.com

When 30 August

September

Morgan

What Film

Directorial feature debut from Ridley Scott's son Luke, this creepy science fiction chiller looks set to make children scary all over again. Specifically, genetically engineered children out to menace Kate Mara. Think *Alien* meets *The Omen* and you're half way there.

Where General theatrical release

When 2 September



The Bazaar Of Bad Dreams

What Paperback

From prolific literary nightmare-weaver Stephen King, this anthology of short stories from last year finally gets the floppy cover release to make your daily commute that little

more nightmareish. King prefaces each story with exclusive author's notes.

Where Bookstores worldwide

When 6 September

Slugs

What Blu-ray/DVD

Shuffling onto disc is this fantastically



absurd creature feature from the same man who gave us the notoriously bonkers *Pieces*. From the reliably brilliant Arrow Films, it's soaked in splatter and boasts more bonus features

than you can shake a salt cellar at.

Where ArrowFilms.co.uk

When 26 September

October

Scream Queens Season 2

What TV Series

Putting the sass into slash, the polarising but punchy murder mystery series returns, this time set in the creepy confines of a hospital. Given the location and return of Jamie Lee Curtis, we're hoping for *Halloween II* references.

Where E4

When October TBC

Dracula

What Audio Drama

Noted British thespians Tom Hiddleston and David Suchet as Jonathan Harker and the Count respectively bring lavish vocal class to this esteemed BBC adaption of Bram Stoker's famed novel. Shut the curtains and turn down the lights for some vampish melodrama.

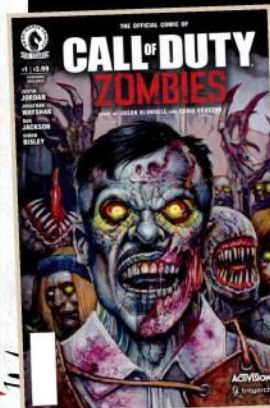
Where Bookstores worldwide

When 6 October

Call of Duty Zombies

What Comic

From the pen of Justin Jordan and the pencil (or drawing tablet, we suppose) of Justin Wayshak comes this official tie-in



to the video game shooter's zombie mode. Following *Black Ops II*'s *Buried*, we're anticipating gut-munching and bullets in roughly equal measure.

Where DarkHorse.com

When 19 October

Next issue! We'll be back on 1 November for another 116 pages of horrible fun. See you then...

PREMONITIONS

Previews of the scariest
films coming soon...



STRANGE DAYS

At some point the cinema audience starts to suspect that Doris isn't just pretending anymore.



OUIJA

ORIGIN OF EVIL

Didn't like the first *Ouija*? Don't worry, neither did the producers. Bryan Cairns finds out why the sequel is taking an entirely different route...

N

obody – including the restless souls dwelling on the other side – could have predicted that horror flick *Ouija* would earn a sequel. The

2014 sleeper hit about teenagers who unwittingly unleash a malevolent presence after using a *Ouija* board may have been lucrative at the box office, but it failed to impress viewers or critics. Hence, when Universal, Blumhouse and Platinum Dunes announced they were conjuring the follow-up *Ouija: Origin Of Evil*, even director Mike Flanagan (*Oculus*, *Hush*) initially hesitated.

“I definitely had reservations,” he says. “The original performed well

DETAILS

RELEASE DATE

21 October

RATING

15 TBC

DIRECTOR

Mike Flanagan

STARRING

Elizabeth Reaser,
Annalise Basso,
Lulu Wilson,
Doug Jones

financially. I think it did \$105 million worldwide on its \$5 million budget. That's impressive, but it certainly didn't resonate with the critics and with a lot of viewers. I was reluctant when it was first put in front of me, but what Jason Blum and the guys at Platinum Dunes were saying was,

“We acknowledge the problems the first movie had, and because we have this opportunity to essentially have a regular Halloween franchise for teenagers,’ it was really important for them to make the best movie they could.

“I do believe if you are going to do a sequel to something – or a reboot,



“You should never try to do a sequel to a movie that you don't feel you can improve”



Horrorville: Although many people will know you from *The Twilight Saga*, *Ouija: Origin of Evil* is your first horror film. What made now the right time to jump into that genre?

Elizabeth Reaser: It didn't feel like a horror movie. The characters didn't know they were in a horror movie. They're going about their business and

ELIZABETH REASER

having this family drama unfold. Something starts happening in the house that no-one is aware of, except for Doris. I thought it was a really psychological script. As an audience member, that's the kind of thing that hooks me. The characters and story felt so authentic.

HV: Ouija boards have been around for decades. What's the fascination with these objects?

ER: I remember being at so many slumber parties and that was always a thing. I grew up in Michigan and it was always fun to pull out the Ouija board. The suspension of disbelief happens so easily. For whatever reason, it really captures the imagination. It's like a conduit. It feels like you are connecting to something that's not there.

HV: Alice initially seems fine with Doris's strange behaviour. Where do things go wrong?

ER: In the beginning it seems to go right in that my daughter has this gift. She's touched in some way and she's able to communicate with Alice's late husband. That to me is an incredible miracle. As the story unfolds, [it emerges that] it's not Doris's dad.

HV: What surprised you the most about making a horror film?

ER: What surprised me is how much it didn't feel like a horror movie, and how exhausting it was. When someone is in these situations, it's the most heightened emotions. You can't fake it. It has to be real, otherwise the audience knows [and] the whole thing comes crashing down. This took so much focus. It's really exhausting to be that upset and scared all the time. It's also the most exciting thing for an actor because you get to play these heightened emotions.



» a remake or anything that is derivative of an existing movie – you should never try and do a sequel to a movie that you don't feel you can improve,” Flanagan continues. “From that perspective, that was attractive to me, this idea we could bring the franchise back up. That was hard to resist because Blumhouse and Platinum Dunes were really supportive of wanting to do something different.

“I was looking at the original movie and saying, ‘Well, I don't really want to do a movie about teenagers being eliminated one at a time.’ I feel that's really tired. I've always wanted to do something that was a period piece. I love stories about fractured families and single parents. These are usually things you say to a studio that get you kicked out of the room when it comes to a horror franchise, especially one aimed at teenagers. I was really encouraged from the beginning that everyone seemed game for that. They didn't want to repeat the mistakes from the first movie.”

If *Ouija: Origin of Evil*'s chilling trailer is any indication, the studio and production companies listened. The movie travels back to Los Angeles, 1967, where widow Alice Zander (Elizabeth Reaser) and her two daughters – teenager Paulina (Annalise Basso) and 10-year-old Doris (Lulu Wilson) – run a

séance scam. Their father perished the previous year in a car accident, and this has become the family business. But, as they augment the con with the addition of the Ouija board, things go to hell.

IS ANYBODY THERE?

“What used to be something that they didn't really think was working starts to actually happen,” Flanagan explains. “They feel they can do what they've been pretending to do. The opportunity to do that is irresistible. The problem is, whenever you are communicating to the spirit world, you never know who you are really talking to. That's what ends up driving the scares.”

IT'S ALL IN YOUR HEAD

There may not be gore in this PG-13 movie but there are certainly plenty of terrifying moments.



Doris's natural ability to converse with the deceased also makes her vulnerable to possession. Soon enough, she's displaying supernatural powers, acting strangely and freaking her family out. Alice doesn't know where to turn.

“Alice doesn't have too many options,” reports Flanagan. “Initially, Alice is excited about the prospects of Doris being able to communicate with the dead. When things start to look like that's becoming dangerous, enter the priest and principal at Doris's school. He's noticed an alarming change in her behaviour. He comes in to lend an expertise about the spirit world, especially when it comes to talking



“Flanagan’s other contributions to horror proved he’s a master at ramping up the suspense.”

about possession, and to reach out to this struggling family.”

Flanagan’s other contributions to horror proved he’s a master at ramping up the suspense. He doesn’t rely just on shock value, but builds the momentum and then delivers the goods.

“Expectations with a lot of modern horror are that you need a certain amount of jump scares, that they are metered out and without them you don’t actually have a horror movie,” offers Flanagan. “I tend to look at it very differently.

“Jump scares [are] startling and can be appropriate in these types of movies, [but] they also relieve tension. They don’t create it, and I never like to relieve tension. My general philosophy is once we start to apply the pressure narratively and get our feet on the audience’s neck, I never want to let that pressure up. Jump scares pop the balloon we’ve been trying so hard to create around them. With this movie, similar to my other things, there are still some startles. I’ve tried much

harder to create that pressure cooker feeling, particularly in the second half.”

GROWN-UP SCARES

Genre fan-favourite Doug Jones also appears in *Ouija: Origin Of Evil*. Flanagan refuses to divulge his role but, by the sound of it, Jones will once again disappear in makeup and prosthetics to emerge as a gruesome ghoul.

“I had worked with Doug on my first horror movie, *Absentia*,” Flanagan reports. “He’s in it for about 90 seconds. That movie had no budget and it was such an amazing thing to have someone of Doug’s stature on our set for one day. We had such a good experience that I wanted to try to get him in everything I ever do. For this, he does some of his really amazing creature work. He will be front and centre when it comes to the more demonic and ghastly spectres in the movie. He also represents another character that has some surprises.”

Ouija: Origin Of Evil is rated PG-13 in the US and many moviegoers associate

ABOVE

Okay, the family’s line of business isn’t quite conventional to start with, but a poor choice of new business equipment doesn’t usually have consequences this

that rating with watered-down horror – less gore, less guts and less terror. However, Flanagan doesn’t appear bothered by the mentality that PG-13 represents an inferior product.

“Some of the scariest movies that I saw growing up, and left the biggest footprint of trauma on me, were actually PG or PG-13,” says Flanagan. “PG-13 gets a bad rep these days. Somehow, ‘that’s not true horror’. I couldn’t disagree more. One of the things I really wanted to do with this movie, because I knew it was going to be PG-13 from the beginning, and I knew it was going to be accessible to teenagers, was address [the idea], ‘Don’t teenagers deserve good horror movies, too? Why is this something that is exclusive for people over 17?’

“When I was growing up, there were movies like *The Changeling* and *The Watcher In The Woods*, which still terrifies me,” Flanagan concludes. “Look at *Poltergeist*. These movies were terrifying and they never had to rely on the crutch of intense gore or brutality in order to achieve their scares. When it comes to suspense, when it comes to legitimately chilling moments and the kind of horror you remember the next night, the rating doesn’t matter for that. That’s what I’m hoping we’ve achieved with *Ouija: Origin Of Evil*.”



THE GREASY STRANGLER

It's the gross-out debut that's wowing festivals. Josh Winning meets *The Greasy Strangler*...

ABOVE

Calm yourself, ladies! Big Brayden (Sky Elobar) lets it all hang out.



t's January 2016. *Horrorville* is sitting in a dark screening room with a handful of industry types waiting for one of the most talked-about films of this year's Sundance Film Festival. The credits roll on *The Greasy Strangler*. On screen, a 70-year-old man rolls back on the bed, throws his legs in the air and farts. A grease-slathered monster stalks the streets. Eyeballs explode. There's a joke involving a character misunderstanding the word "potato". Bewildered titters stir in the audience. People scurry out of the cinema mid-scene. Those who remain, though, are on the floor wrung with anxious, hurty belly laughs.

"I only sat in on one screening, which was the first one," says director Jim Hosking, chatting to *Horrorville* from his North London home six months

later. "People didn't really know what to expect and I found it slightly nerve-wracking and felt rather nauseous, and then at the same time quite excited because I suppose you can't really make a film like *The Greasy Strangler* without wanting to confound people a little bit. I quite enjoy the fact that it ambushes people."

That's one way of putting it. Gory. Unsettling. Prone to repetitive tirades that fray the nerves (and patience). *The Greasy Strangler* more than earns its rep as the oddest thing audiences have seen in a long time, riding festival buzz all the way to the UK – Hosking's birthplace. The film's frazzled antiheroes are Big Ronnie (Michael St Michaels) and Big Brayden (Sky Elobar), a bickering father and son who live together in a ramshackle home – and

DETAILS

RELEASE DATE

7 October

RATING

18

DIRECTOR

Jim Hosking

STARRING

Michael St Michaels, Sky Elobar, Elizabeth De Razzo

when they're not there, they're donning pink turtlenecks to host the kind of walking LA disco tours that would give fact-checkers night terrors.

When the sun goes down on the Hollywood hills, though, Big Ronnie greases himself up for a night of wanton slaughter, prowling the streets of downtown LA

for victims while resembling a giant melted candle. "I really liked the characters and found them quite sweet," Hoskins says somewhat perversely, "and if they behaved appallingly it wasn't because they were malevolent, it was because they were almost like children; they just didn't really know any better and were quite instinctive."

That balance of sickly and sweet is key to *The Greasy Strangler*'s chewy charm. Though Hoskins admits he



LEFT
The Greasy Strangler in action! You'll never cook with grease again.

"never really saw this as a horror film", there's no denying his feature debut (which found champions in producers Ben Wheatley and Elijah Wood) fits the splatter mould, even if its humour is more *Monty Python* than *Friday The 13th*. Its closest tonal touchstone is the back catalogue of John Waters, but Hoskins cites Terry Gilliam, *The Young Ones* and *Eraserhead* as his main inspirations, adding that he drew "more from British TV and the British sensibility about sex and bodies and relationships".

NUDE AND RUDE

Sex and bodies are all over Hosking's film. Both Ronnie and Brayden frequently appear full-frontal (a couple of prosthetic penises both rescue and destroy their modesty), while Brayden's love interest Janet (Elizabeth De Razzo) is more than happy to shed a few layers. "She did really put herself out there," marvels Hosking of the *Eastbound & Down* star. "She has such funny ideas and instincts, but also she was very brave with what she was prepared to do. She was quite glad that there was a relatively large merkin!"



ABOVE
Don't this pair just look divine?!

Nudity wasn't the only thing Hosking put his cast through. Shooting in "quite filthy, grotty, very smelly locations" over a mad-scrabble 18 days in LA, the director and his crew used a real house for Ronnie and Brayden's home, and hardly any set dressing was required. "It was one of those hoarder's houses where there were just all manner of mementos accrued over the years," he reveals. "Most of the crew wore face masks because the house hadn't really been cleaned for 50 years. The guy who owned it was quite keen on strange films and was also a very generous altruistic type. But the locations were smelly. We were

shooting downtown and there were human faeces right in front of us. Hopefully you can smell that when you're watching the film."

If conditions weren't exactly the height of Hollywood glamour, Hosking is quick to point out how readily he and his cast and crew adapted to the loopy world of *The Greasy Strangler*. "It's funny how quickly you become desensitised to something," he laughs. "The last scene we filmed, which actually isn't in the film, was Ronnie and Brayden running down the street naked. In the background a couple of garbage trucks came rolling past and people were shouting and whistling at them. I remember thinking, 'This feels totally normal to me!'"

Though it won't appeal to all tastes ("when you dismantle anything, whether it's music or film, some people will applaud you for it, and some people absolutely detest it," says Hosking), *The Greasy Strangler* whole-heartedly announces an exciting new British talent. And Hosking's next film – *An Evening With Beverly Luff Lin* – promises something even wackier than a greasy serial killer. "I would say it's a comedy, it's also almost a love story, but it's quite singular, quite peculiar," the director says. "I hope it's equally distinctive but in a very different way." If *The Greasy Strangler* is anything to go by, we wouldn't expect anything else. **W**

"Most of the crew wore face masks because the house hadn't been cleaned for 50 years"

I TOLD YOU I WAS ILL

Someone's about to leave hospital before they're meant to.



NIGHT OF THE TRAMPIRES

Stop motion monsters on the rampage in Wales...

Somewhere in Bridgend, monsters are being made. Little do the residents of the Welsh town know, but an army of vicious bloodsucking fiends is being assembled in secret. Their goal? To take over the world... Or, at least to drunkenly bite down on a few necks.

Luckily, these vampires are only a few inches high and made out of plasticine. They're the villains at the heart of *Chuck Steel: Night Of The Trampires* – a full length stop motion animated horror comedy due to be released next year. It's an '80s-inspired

horror comedy that was originally inspired by writer/director Mike Mort's love of films from the period including *"Fright Night, The Thing, the remake of The Blob and many more..."*

The titular hero was "something I came up with when I was in school," says Mort of big-haired, square-jawed Chuck. "When I was about 15, I drew him in my school book and I used to make Super 8 films with the character, and I did a college film with Chuck Steel in it as well."

TASTY APPETISER

Most horror fans, however, will have first met the character in *Raging Balls Of Steel Justice* – a superb 15-minute short that was released in 2013. A loving parody of *Escape From New York* and

DETAILS

RELEASE DATE
TBC 2017

RATING
TBC

DIRECTOR
Michael Mort

STARRING
TBC

other bullet-spitting action films, *Steel Justice* was fast, funny and looked amazing. It was a big hit with fans but, as producer Joseph D'Morais tells us, the plan was always to make a full-length sequel.

"I met Mike, I think, about eight or nine years ago. He showed me his script for *Night*

Of The Trampires, but it was going to be quite expensive. So, rather than attempt that first, we took the character of Chuck Steel and made a short film. That turned out very well. It premiered at FrightFest 2013, and went down an absolute treat to a virtually full house."

With that success under their belts, Mort's team at Animortal Studios began actively producing *Trampires*. Far grander in scale than the short ("I think we're up to something like 400 puppets now," says D'Morais), Chuck Steel's

WHEELY GOOD

Chuck Steel can ride and slay the undead.



"Every animated film I've done, I've always taken great pleasure at destroying everything!"

THE TRAMPS ARE REVOLTING
Each individual trampire is different.



second adventure finds him taking on a rampaging horde of drunken vampiric bums. Once again the film is being made using old school stop motion techniques, a process that is slow going ("we're achieving about 70 seconds a week," says Mort), but looks fantastic.

"We're a small independent film," he says. "But we're aiming high. The stuff we're trying to do and the size of the crew we've got means that we're not doing as much footage as we'd like. But the results are looking good – and that's the main thing."

Indeed, the footage released so far has been nothing short of spectacular, with Steel racing through the city streets on a machine gun-totting motorbike and facing off against hordes of the undead. Mort also

promises a car chase and a grandiose circus-based finale. Plus, of course, lots and lots of monsters...

"We've got loads of trampires – every one of them is an individual design," says Mort of his undead army. "One of the things that we're keen to do with this is, our human characters are all made out of plasticine, with the traditional stop motion look that you might expect. But the villains are made to look like they're made from different material, to look more like prosthetic and animatronic-type creatures from that era, so stylistically, there's a difference between the good guys and the bad guys." Don't expect many of the models to make it to the end of filming, however. "Because there's so much chaos and destruction, our

FEARLESS TRAMPIRE KILLERS
Who's your money on?

puppets are pretty much getting destroyed as we film. We're shooting them to pieces and blowing them up and stuff – so they get wrecked." After all this time is there a degree of catharsis in that? "Yes. Every animated film I've done, I've always taken great pleasure at destroying everything!"

By the time *Night Of The Trampires* is released to cinemas next year, the film will have been actively in production for five years, and in Mort and D'Morais's heads for much longer. It must be a relief to finally be getting the film out there. "Yeah, I do pinch myself occasionally," says Mort. "It's cathartic. It's a strange film that's coming out of the leftfield really, but hopefully there's an audience out there for it. I think there is. But until we've finished, I'll probably find it hard to relax."

And after that, how about *Chuck Steel 3*? Does he have any ideas of what's next for his be-quiffed hero? "Yeah. I've got ideas for where we could go with it. But I've not written anything yet, because I don't want to jinx it, for one thing, and I've got too much else to do at the moment. But if it goes down well, then yeah, there's definitely more places it can go. There's enough scope left to go wherever we want."

Keep an eye on *Horrorville* for more on *Chuck Steel: Night Of The Trampires* in the coming months. 





ABOVE

The film will likely make any parent shudder.

INSET

Virginia (Julieta Cardinali) goes through hell. Almost literally.

WHITE COFFIN

There are fates worse than death in this Argentinian horror...

Is there a more terrifying thought than losing a child? *White Coffin*, the new film from Daniel De La Vega, has been described as an “action horror road movie”, but it hinges on that horrible premise. When Virginia’s daughter Rebeca (Fiorela Duranda) is kidnapped, the young mother decides that she will go to any length to get her back – even if it means allying with the sinister Mason (Rafael Ferro) and paying a terrible price...

“*White Coffin* emerged from the desire that I and [writers] Adrián and Ramiro García Bogliano have for developing films of a kind that are not usually seen in my country,” says Del Vega of the follow up to 2014’s well-received *Necrofobia*. “It’s a story about decisions that tests the moral limits of the characters; an infernal rollercoaster ride over 70 minutes.”

The project began nine years ago but petered in and out of development over that time. Why did it take so long? “Because of its darkness,” insists Del Vega. “I think that time was necessary for the development of our genre cinema context.” Now the project is back, complete, and distributed by Del Toro Films.

Heading up the movie is Julieta Cardinali as Virginia, who first worked with Del Vega on *Necrofobia*. “We see her with her daughter in a very intimate and calm situation at first,” she says. “But when her daughter is kidnapped, we see a mother who is capable of doing anything. She turns into a kind of fearless bulldozer.” It was a role that Cardinali admits was “exhausting”, due to the road movie format. “There was a lot of travelling, and we had to face the inconveniences of the weather as it was very cold.”

DETAILS

UK RELEASE

Date TBC

RATING

TBC

DIRECTOR

Daniel De La Vega

STARRING

Julieta Cardinali, Eleonora Wexler, Fiorela Duranda, Damián Dreizik

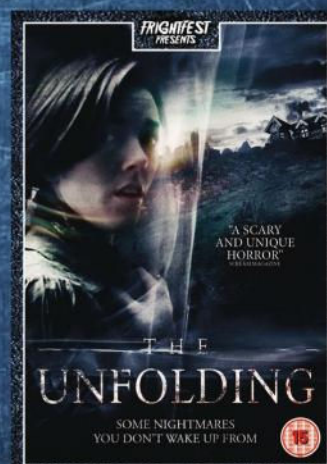
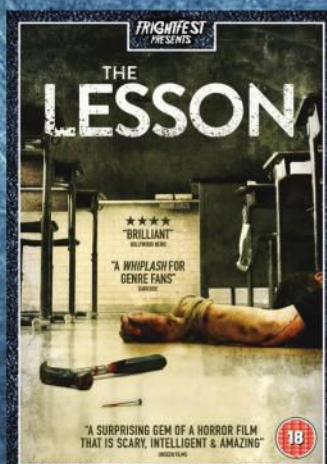
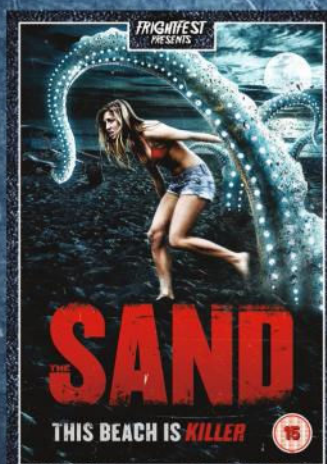
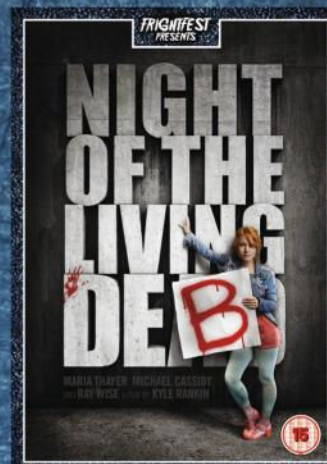
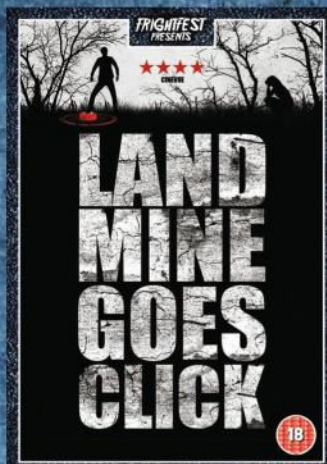
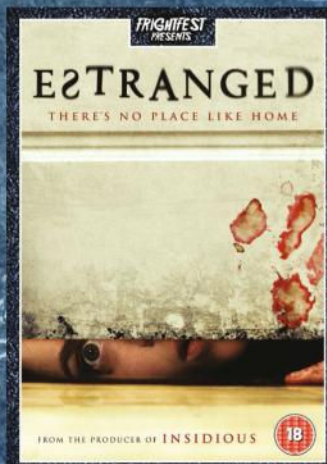
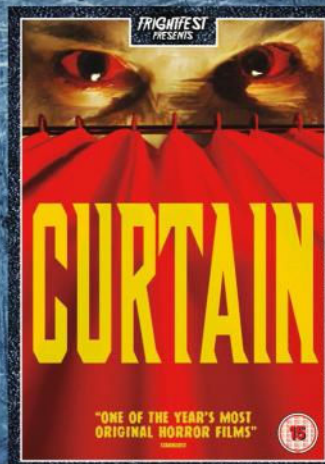
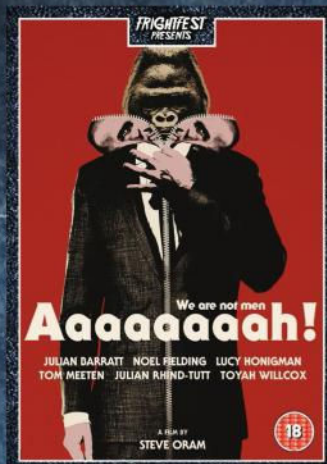
Despite that, Cardinali is fulsome with praise for Del Vega, saying, “He’s a great actor’s director. You give yourself over and play what he wants you to play.”

The film was shot in various locations around the Buenos Aires Province in Argentina, notably San Andrés de Giles. “It gave us the loneliness and

strangeness that we wanted for this story,” says Del Vega. And while he admits it was “very complex” to make a road movie on a limited budget, he’s pleased with the end results. “It’s the kind of movie that I enjoy and which is not so common in [Argentinian] cinema. The idea was create an insane horror-themed amusement park where the spectator gets no respite!”

See *White Coffin*’s UK premiere at Horror Channel FrightFest on 26 August.

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THE WITCH IS BACK

17 YEARS LATER, A NEW SET OF TEENS ARE ABOUT TO GET LOST IN THE BURKITTSVILLE WOODS. **WILL SALMON** TALKS TO **ADAM WINGARD** ABOUT THE RETURN OF THE BLAIR WITCH

The *Blair Witch Project* remains one of the most influential horror movies of all time. So when Adam Wingard's new film, *The Woods*, debuted a trailer with lots of shaky cam, blurry trees and screaming, we all assumed the *You're Next* director was merely paying homage to 1999's classic crossover hit...

Little did we know how wrong we were about to be proved. Forget *Justice League* and *Guardians Of The Galaxy 2* – the most talked about event at San Diego Comic Con this year was when a crowd sat down to watch *The Woods* and found themselves watching *Blair Witch* – a surprise sequel (not a reboot), designed to wash away all your memories of the woeful rush-job that was 2000's *Book Of Shadows: Blair Witch 2*. It sees James (James Allen McCune), the brother of the original film's Heather, venture out into the haunted woods of Burkittsville with a group of friends – Lisa (Callie Hernandez), Peter (Brandon Scott) and Ashley (Corbin Reid) – searching for answers to what happened all those years ago. What they find is something very nasty indeed.

UNHAPPY CAMPERS

"Some people were kind of shell-shocked," Wingard tells us a few days later. "They couldn't believe that that had just happened to them, because they really didn't know something like that was coming – that they were about to watch a sequel to a horror classic."

Unfortunately, Wingard missed the big reveal, thanks to a delayed flight from Vancouver. "I got in about halfway through, so I missed the moment at the beginning of the film where they first say 'Blair Witch', which was a real bummer. But I was still excited because I came in during the last 45 minutes, which is, essentially, one long string of non-stop horror set-pieces. The movie has sporadic set-pieces in the first half, but that last 45 minutes, it's relentless."

The reaction to the first screening was everything a horror director could hope for. "It was really great to just walk in and see a lot of people just really stressed out," Wingard laughs. "There was a guy with his head in his hands in the aisle right next to me. People were laughing at all the right parts, and they were jumping. It was instantly very obvious that it was going well." Job done, then.

Wingard's involvement in reviving the legend of the *Blair Witch* came in 2013 via a chance encounter with the original film's co-creator Eduardo Sánchez. "We happened to be on tour with *V/H/S 2*, we'd just premiered it at Sundance. I was riding in a van with Eduardo and [producer] Gregg Hale for a screening in Salt Lake City, and it was like a good 45-minute drive. I was talking to Ed, and I actually just said, 'Isn't it about time for somebody to reboot *Blair Witch*?' It feels like the whole found-footage thing has gone through this whole era, and it's kind of come to an end, so now it's time to get back to the original."

Cut to a week later and a call from Lionsgate... "We were at the SXSW film festival and Gregg and Ed took us aside. They'd talked to Lionsgate already, and they said that they felt that we were the guys for the job. Gregg said that he couldn't imagine anybody better than us doing it and he gave us his blessing and all that kind of stuff. And we were off."

The Blair Witch Project, of course, already has a sequel – the rushed, confused mess that was Joe Berlinger's widely-loathed *Book Of Shadows: Blair Witch 2*, hastily released just a year after the original. It's safe to say that Wingard is *not* a fan. Indeed, he's refreshingly frank that the second film served as a template of what *not* to do. "It was very important to us especially, to me and Simon Barrett [the film's scriptwriter], when developing this thing to try to do the first film justice. Because we felt that the second film threw the series so off the rails. And lately, some people have come around to it and are citing it as a film that they don't absolutely hate, which..." – he pauses, carefully measuring his disdain – "Well, let's just say that's a viewpoint I can't relate to. I remember that second film coming out. I was just so disappointed because I was such a fan of the first one. So for us, it was about paying homage to that first film and getting into the spirit of it as best as we could." For Wingard that meant cleaving close to the template established by the first movie.





ABOVE
Here's hoping this group of friends brought some tissues with them.

"We definitely wanted to stay true to the found footage angle and we wanted to create rules that we stuck to. This is a true found-footage movie. We don't cheat. It never breaks the fourth wall. It doesn't take you out of it. We set up rules of what we can and cannot show, and how we can show it – and we stick with it for the rest of the movie."

That didn't mean, however, dragging the cast out into the woods and making them live through the experience in quite the same viscerally real way that Heather Donahue, Michael C Williams and Joshua Leonard endured in the original. "Our filming was a bit more structured," Wingard admits. "There was a little bit more money. It was less 'let's go out there and try things'. There was a definitive script. That's not to say that we weren't loose with it, especially when it came to the horror set-pieces. Because sometimes you're out there in the woods and you get inspired. There's a couple of sequences in the film where Callie Hernandez, who plays Lisa, was just really in the zone, she was channelling something. I would take these set-pieces that we were doing and take them a bit further and let the actors react to it and stuff."

Speaking of the actors, Wingard is fulsome in his praise for the film's young leads. "I think that the best sequence in the movie is this one where we kind of simulate what it's like to have a nervous breakdown. They hear some noises and Callie's character starts freaking out. She almost has a panic attack. When we were shooting that scene, she was actually working herself up so

much that she couldn't breathe. She was almost passing out. But it's that kind of commitment that really makes this movie work. You can throw a bunch of loud noises at the audience and have all kinds of creepy visuals, but at the end of the day, you have to believe that those actors are in that situation. And that's why the first film was so effective, because it really was just about empathising with these characters."

MILLENNIAL TENSION

If there's one thing the original is infamous for, it's the three characters' ill-preparedness in the face of supernatural menace. "Should've packed a phone!" wags would say, as Heather, Michael and Josh wandered blindly through the woods. Not this gang, however. The kids here are equipped with an array of gadgets including Bluetooth cameras and even a drone to help in their witch hunting. Behind the scenes, however, a degree of trickery was required to get the best results.

"In the movie they're wearing these earpiece cameras that are very discrete, but if we'd actually filmed the real footage with that stuff, it'd look like complete garbage. So we had to come up with this system where we'd use little cameras – which were small, but not small enough to be in the shot, to film the other actors. And sometimes there were camera operators doubling with the actors. It just depended on what the situation was."

If there's one scene in the original that sticks out in the minds of fans, it's the discovery of the

shack in the woods where Rustin Parr, the child-killing hermit and likely tool of the Blair Witch, is said to have murdered youngsters. As anyone who has seen the trailer for the new film will know, the shack is back. Stepping into the faithfully re-created building was one of key moments of filming for the director.

"The most exciting part really was just going into that basement set for the first time. I waited to go into it until Tom Hammock, the production designer, pretty much had it done, so that I would have the full experience. It was eerie, because he copied everything so precisely. He went online and he found all of these different photographs that people took as the first film came out, before that house was demolished – the actual house from the first film. You could see a lot more detail than you could see in the film, as most of that footage is so fuzzy. Tom took the time to retrace every single brick exactly – the shape of it, you know; he had a whole grid layout of it. You could just lay it out on a table, and you'd see the size of every brick – all the little nooks and crannies of it. And he'd cut those out and put them in our actual basement.

"It was definitely like you were really back there. So walking down those steps, kind of in slow motion, with the soundtrack of the first film, with Heather screaming and stuff in your mind, was pretty creepy but kind of fun. It was like, 'Wow, we're really doing this.'"

THE CURSE OF THE BLAIR WITCH

The Blair Witch Project was a hit in ways that no one could have anticipated while it was being filmed. The expectation for this sequel, however, is a lot higher. If it's a success, Lionsgate will no doubt be hoping for a slew of potential sequels. Is that something

that Wingard would be interested in being a part of? He's shown remarkable versatility in his career so far –

would he want to come back for another run around the woods of Maryland?

"It depends. I would definitely be involved with it, and I would want to be involved in who directs it. But to be honest with you, directing found-footage – at least something on this scale, where we were trying to make one of the best found-footage movies ever made, with tons of set-pieces and all this and all that... you know, it is absolutely the hardest type of movie to make.

"I mean, you don't have any tricks that you can fall back on, because at a certain point, you have these concrete rules that you have to abide by in terms of why you're filming things, how you're filming them, how you're hearing them. And it's

really hard to know what you're getting when you're shooting. You're just having to do a little bit of guesswork and hope for the best and cover yourself as much as possible."

He admits that shooting this film was punishing, for both himself and the cast. "I would say there's at least two points on the production where I was going to have a full-on panic attack that lasted for days, because I was like, 'I don't know what we're doing here'. It felt like we were making a movie for the first time.

It was only once we were done shooting and I was able to sit down at the edit that a huge weight was lifted. It was like, 'Okay, it does work.'

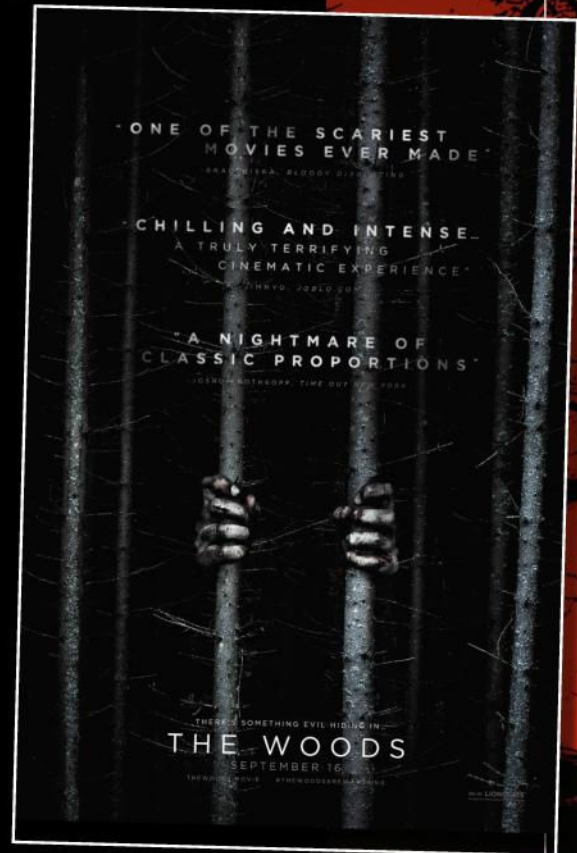
"That's not to say I wouldn't want to do one again, because I felt like I learned more making this than anything. I definitely would never say never. But not right away."

Somewhat spookier is the injury he has sustained in the weeks since... "I was talking to Eduardo recently. He was telling me this story about how his brother or his cousin or somebody who was working on the music for the end credits for the

original *Blair Witch*... he was going to put out a whole album of just these really cool atmospheric sounds. But apparently he never put it out because he was working away one night on this thing, and apparently he saw some sort of... weird *thing* in his house that watched him for a couple of hours. Apparently he ended up deleting it all.

"And in the spirit of that, I was like, 'Oh man, that's what I want to get into.' And I was making some music when I broke my toe. I was just sitting here and I was making music for the soundtrack for *Blair Witch*. And I just stubbed it and broke it. The curse of the Blair Witch!"

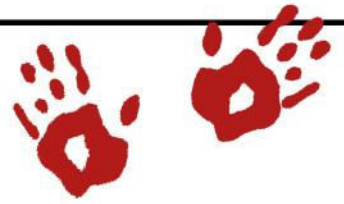
Blair Witch is out in the UK on 15 September.



ABOVE
Fooled you! *The Blair Witch* sequel disguised as an entirely new film.

"Directing found-footage is absolutely the hardest type of movie to make"

SO WHO IS THE BLAIR WITCH?



DOM RESEIGH-LINCOLN DELVES INTO THE MYTHOLOGY CREATED BY THE FIRST FILM AND ITS SPINOFFS...



infernal affiliation into her hands and feet and eventually leaving her to die in the bitter cold. Soon after Kedward disappeared from her place of execution and was presumed dead. [4]

With Kedward gone, a sense of peace returned to the township, but by midwinter the town was soon sent into turmoil. Every one of the men and women who accused Kedward of witchcraft mysteriously vanished along with half of Blair's children. Fearing the disappearances were the work of Kedward, returned to the world to punish the people of Blair, they fled the town and vowed never to utter her name again.

More than 200 years before Heather, Josh and Mike entered the woods in the Black Hills Forest, the legacy of the Blair Witch began to form around one Elly Kedward [1]. An Irish woman living a solitary life in the small Maryland township of Blair, Kedward found herself the target of the most common accusation to be thrown at single women living in America in the late 18th century: witchcraft. A devout Catholic, Kedward was already an outsider in a largely Protestant town and her position only worsened when a group of children accused her of luring them into her home to draw blood. [2]

LEAF IT OUT
Heather Donahue starts to lose her bearings in the original film.

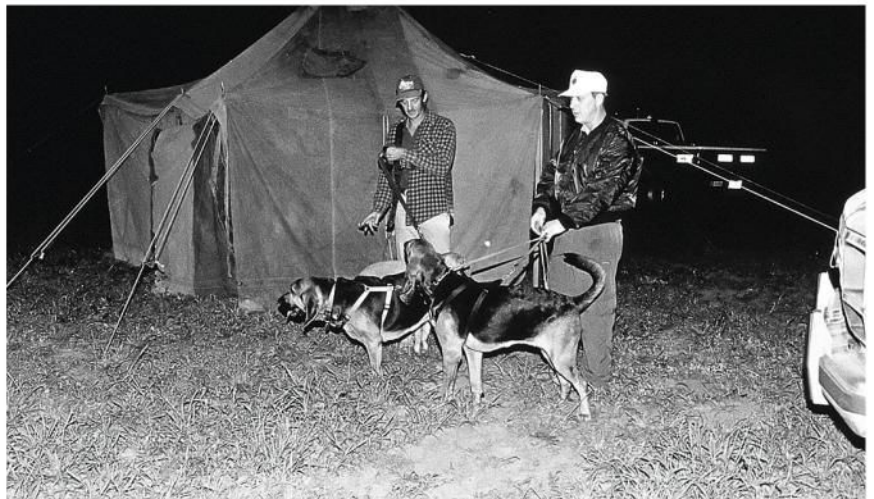
In 1835, almost 39 years later, the town of Burkittsville was founded on the long-abandoned site formerly known as Blair. One year later, 11 witnesses testified to witnessing a pale hand rise out of Tappy East Creek and pull ten-year-old Eileen Treacle beneath the surface to her death. For 13 days after the creek is clogged with oily bundles of sticks, rendering it undrinkable and poisoning livestock. [5]

IN TENTS
Rangers with dogs hunt for missing persons in photos seen in the first film.

The children's claims that Kedward was using the blood, pricked from their fingers with a pin, for satanic rituals was not the first time the old woman had run afoul of Blair's less than inclusive community, with a number of women claiming she had also lived as a prostitute. With the fear of satanic influence still rife in the United States of the 18th century, Kedward was quickly convicted of witchcraft and banished from Blair for good. [3]

A particularly harsh winter was smothering the region in 1785, but this didn't stop her accusers from tying Elly to a wooden sledge and dragging her into the nearby Black Woods. Helplessly tied to a tree, the townspeople tortured Kedward, carving symbols of her supposed

Half a century later, the legend of the Blair Witch struck



KEY BLAIR WITCH DOSSIER [1] [3] THE BLAIR WITCH CHRONICLES [2] BLAIR WITCH: VOLUME III: DIE ELLY KEDWARD SAGE [4] BOOK OF SHADOWS: BLAIR WITCH 2 [5] THE SHADOW OF THE BLAIR WITCH [6] [10]

About the sources

The Blair Witch Project was blessed with a small but unusually rich set of spinoffs in the years following the original film's release. Books, comics, video games and several fake documentaries filled out the mythology of Elly Kedward, Coffin Rock and the sinister happenings around Burkittsville. We've footnoted here where we found these details about the witch and her terrifying legacy.

again when eight-year-old Robin Weaver vanished. Out in the Black Woods, Robin was led by the hand by a woman whose feet seemingly never touched the forest floor. She led her to an old cottage, walked her down to a basement and told her that she'd return shortly. The woman never did and Robin escaped and ran home. Search parties were sent out to hunt for the little girl, but none returned. The bodies of five men were later found bound to the nearby Coffin Rock, naked, disemboweled and with pagan symbols carved into their hands and feet. The bodies vanished soon after. [6]

Other than the occasional, unconfirmed sighting of a pale woman in the woods, very little was spoken about the Blair Witch as Burkittsville entered the 20th century. It wasn't until November 1940 that a new spate of child disappearances blighted the town again. This time a total of eight children vanished over the course of six months and police and families were utterly baffled. That was until the 25 May 1941, when the man responsible walked into the local police station and admitted, "I'm finally finished." That man was Rustin Parr. [7]

Parr had lived for many years in a remote cabin on a mountain near Burkittsville, and while he was something of a hermit he was thought of as amiable and friendly by



GRIM FORECAST

Michael Williams and Joshua Leonard are soon to encounter worse than scattered showers.

the townspeople who encountered him. Parr was a contented man who enjoyed the isolation of his home. [8] That was until a pale woman in a hooded cloak began to visit him. After almost a year of visitations, Parr was close to madness. The woman spoke to him in a nightmarish language, forcing him to sleep in the basement, plaguing his dreams with terrible things. It then commanded him to go into the town and bring local children back to his home. [9]

HIDDEN AWAY

He was sheltering from centuries worth of frights.

Parr took eight children, lead them down to the basement in pairs and made one face the corner of the room while he disemboweled the other. For seemingly no reason, Parr let one of the children, Kyle Brody, live, but not before forcing him to listen the gruesome murders of the other seven. The families of the seven burned Parr's home in the woods to the ground and on 22 November 1941, Parr was hanged. [10] Brody later begins torturing small animals and was eventually institutionalised. There was some speculation that he may even have assisted Parr in the killings. [9]



The Parr murders tear Burkittsville apart, and the town never truly recovers from that dark stain. On 20 October 1994, three students from Montgomery College - Heather Donahue, Joshua Leonard and Michael Williams - arrived and began interviewing local residents on the legend of the Blair Witch. A day later, two fishermen informed the students that Coffin Rock was within walking distance and the trio headed out into the Black Woods in search of it. They were never seen again... [11]

FEATURE

G I R L M E E T S W O R L D

STEPHEN JEWELL TALKS TO MIKE CAREY ABOUT ADAPTING HIS HIT NOVEL *THE GIRL WITH ALL THE GIFTS* FOR THE BIG SCREEN



Starting out as a short story in Charlaïne Harris and Toni Kelner's anthology *An Apple For The Creature*, *The Girl With All The Gifts* has proved to be "a real game changer" for Mike Carey. The 2012 novel provided the London-based author with his first bestseller and was quickly snapped up for big screen adaptation. Carey penned the script himself and the film, starring Glenn Close, Gemma Arterton and Paddy Considine hits cinemas in September. "I'm impatient to get it out into the world," he says. "I'm absolutely delighted with how it's turned out, and every time I see it I get the same feelings of pride and delight."

Horrorville: *The Girl With All The Gifts* first came about because you were asked to contribute to a themed anthology about school days...

Mike Carey: The brief was to write a horror or dark fantasy story with a school setting or with school somewhere in the mix. Having said that I would do it, for many months I just sat there staring at the wall. I couldn't think of a single idea apart from bad *Harry Potter* rip-offs. Then I woke up one day with the idea of Melanie in my mind. Here was this little zombie girl in a classroom, writing an essay on that old staple "what I want to do when I grow up." But we can see what she can't, which is that she's a zombie – so growing up isn't really an option for her.

Horrorville: When did you realise that there was the potential to further explore Melanie's world?

Mike Carey: I wrote the short story in

ABOVE
Sennia Nanua plays Melanie, the centre of *The Girl With All The Gifts*.

four days and sent it in, feeling pretty pleased with how it had come out. But very soon I started to have the strong feeling that there was more to the story and the characters. I couldn't get Melanie out of my head, and I was convinced that what I had written was the first part of something bigger. I just wasn't entirely sure what that something would turn out to be. So I pitched it to Anne Clarke, my editor at Little Brown, and to Camille Gatin, who is a producer at Poison Chef Film Productions. They both said yes more or less simultaneously so from there, I was working on chapter breakdowns for the novel and a treatment for the movie at the same time. The two versions were ricocheting off each other in my head in a very exciting and productive way.

HV: Was working on the screenplay a very different process to the novel?

MC: It's very much the same story told



in two different forms – both absolutely faithful to the original concept. But when you adapt a story from one medium to another you inevitably have to change it along the way, because every medium comes with its own toolkit. Things that work brilliantly in one medium don't necessarily translate easily and directly into another. For example, the novel has multiple points of view. It starts out with Melanie – you're looking at things through her eyes – but then it shows you Helen Justineau's perspective as well as that of Caldwell, Parks and Gallagher. The movie doesn't really do that. It stays with Melanie's point of view throughout. That meant that certain aspects of exposition had to be handled differently, because we only know what she knows.

HV: You've formed a very tight-knit team with Colm McCarthy and Camille Gatin...

MC: Camille brought Colm and me together at a very early stage in the movie's development, and the three of us brainstormed the project into shape over the space of about six months. She's someone who makes things happen, who lays out a road for you and walks it with you, every step of the way. That's not something I've experienced before.

ABOVE
Paddy Considine was the actor Carey had always visualised as Sergeant Parks.

With Colm, he brought a coherent vision to the film that shows itself in both the big picture and the small details. It felt like a masterclass to me. None of the screenwriting I'd done before has approached the experience that I've had on *The Girl With All The Gifts*. Colm has a unique perspective that I came to appreciate and admire in the course of working with him.

HV: Was it important not to overwhelm the film with too much CGI?

MC: There's a perfectly viable version of this film that would have depended on a

lot of green screen and post-production effects. Colm far prefers to do things physically rather than digitally wherever that's possible. He creates his world in camera and uses CGI very sparingly. The look of the hungries, for example, is achieved through make-up and prosthetics rather than digital manipulation. And most of the film was shot in real locations, in many cases with a bare minimum of set dressing.

HV: Did the cast live up to your expectations?

MC: They surpassed my expectations

BELOW
Who lives in a room like this?



Fellside

A ghost story set in a maximum-security prison, *Fellside* is Carey's latest novel and, like *The Girl With All The Gifts*, it's also making its way to the big screen. Published earlier this year, Carey, McCarthy and Gatin plan to reunite on the proposed film.

"I'm actually working on a draft of the screenplay right now for *Poison Chef*," reveals Carey. "We've done a lot of planning and world-building and the story seems to be in

a really good place right now. As with *The Girl With All The Gifts*, Colm will direct and Camille will produce, so it will be our second outing together."

Noting that "the development process of the movie once again overlapped the writing of the novel, although not to the same extent as with *Girl*," Carey, McCarthy and Gatin have undertaken plenty of hands-on research. "The three of us have visited a number of prisons together, sometimes to do workshops with the

prisoners and sometimes just to look around and get a sense of the geography and the layout," says Carey. "We actually went into Holloway, the biggest women's prison in the UK, shortly after it closed, which was a very valuable experience."

Centring around Jess Moulson, who forms a friendship with the ghost of a dead child after being sent down to the Yorkshire prison for life, Carey believes that *Fellside* is a very different book to *The Girl With All The Gifts*,

although there are some striking similarities.

"I started writing it in the first person with one of the minor characters, Sylvie Stock, as the narrator, but that didn't really work," he explains. "The single viewpoint imposed too many limitations on the narrative. So in the end, I moved back to a mode of storytelling that was closer to *The Girl With All The Gifts* in that there are multiple points of view, although Jess has the main through-line as we go through the book."

in every respect. When I wrote the screenplay, I mostly didn't try to do that thing of visualising a specific actor in a particular role, although I know a lot of screenwriters find that useful. The one exception was Sergeant Parks. His voice kept drifting into an American idiom, so to keep him straight in my head, I imagined a British actor saying his lines. Sometimes it was Sean Bean but more usually it was Paddy Considine. So when Paddy became Parks, he was exactly the Parks I'd always seen inside my head. Every nuance, just perfect.

HV: You also have Gemma Arterton as Helen Justineau and Glenn Close as Caroline Caldwell...

MC: And they're both awesome in those very different roles – as the two women who represent the opposed poles of Melanie's experience of humanity. Glenn was perfect to portray Caldwell's cold intellectual passion, and Gemma was a compassionate, tortured Justineau – perceptibly at breaking point from the first moment we see her. Sitting on set and watching those actors turn my lines into life felt like a career-defining moment. But Sennia Nanua, who plays Melanie, also makes the film her own. She has to portray both the sweetness and innocence of a child's perspective and a strength and pragmatism that at times come close to ruthlessness. She's truly phenomenal.

HV: Melanie is certainly a considerably more complex role than the average Walker in *The Walking Dead*...

MC: Melanie is not your typical undead; she's sort of a high functioning zombie. She is in many respects, in the way that she thinks and feels, a normal child. I'd

RIGHT
Just a pleasant walk out in the countryside...



even say she's an idealised child, the daughter that you would love to have. She's intelligent, brave and intellectually open to the world, as well as curious, compassionate, generous and loving to a fault. And yet she also has the hunger for human flesh that comes with her condition, and she can't control that – or, when it first comes over her, even understand it.

HV: If *The Girl With All The Gifts* is a success, would you be open to a possible sequel?

MC: The problem with a sequel is that the story builds to a climax that changes everything, including the nature of the world where the characters are living. If I did a straightforward sequel, it would belong to a different genre. It would be

a book about the politics of building a new world, so it wouldn't be a zombie novel. But it's possible to look at Melanie's world and see where other stories could be slotted into it. And eventually I decided to write one of those stories. The temptation just got too great. I wanted to dive in and explore that world some more.

HV: That's your next novel, *The Boy On The Bridge*, which is a prequel to *The Girl With All The Gifts*...

MC: It has a different cast of characters and is set about ten years before *The Girl With All The Gifts*. It gives us some of the missing pieces of the jigsaw, the backstory that makes Melanie's story meaningful. It's about the voyage of the Rosalind Franklin, the mobile laboratory that Melanie and her companions find in *The Girl With All The Gifts*. They find it abandoned in London. This is the story of how it came to be there, and what happened to the crew. 🍷

The Girl With All The Gifts is in UK cinemas from 23 September.

"She's an idealised child, the daughter that you would love to have"

FEATURE

SINS OF THE FATHER

WILL SALMON TALKS TO SEAN BROSNAN, THE WRITER AND
DIRECTOR BEHIND REVENGE THRILLER *MY FATHER DIE*

MY FATHER DIE

It's funny, I never really intended to make a horror," admits Sean Brosnan of his feature debut, *My Father Die*. "I knew I wanted it to be horrific and I am a big fan of a lot of '80s slasher horrors. If you look at some of the Freddy movies, he was so over the top and I liked that. I didn't necessarily want to do that with this, but I liked the tongue-in-cheek humour and the way they blended that with the violence."

You can see what he means. While *My Father Die* bears little obvious resemblance to *A*

Nightmare On Elm Street and *Friday The 13th* (though there is one kill that's straight out of Jason Voorhees's playbook), there are clear traces of the genre's past in its DNA. Not just slashers, but films as diverse as *Night Of The Hunter*, Philip Ridley's *The Reflecting Skin* and Shane Meadows' *Dead Man's Shoes* – which also starred Gary Stretch, who here plays the titular father, Ivan. "I love Shane Meadows' work," Brosnan admits. "It's funny you say that. Maybe subconsciously, something was there. I never used it as a reference, but I definitely see a similarity."

Regardless of influences, one thing that's certain with *My Father Die* is that it's terrific. A full-throttle revenge thriller, it's the story of Asher – a young boy (brilliantly played by newcomer Gabe White) when we first meet him, who ends up on his dad's bad side and is forced to watch on as his brother is beaten to death. It's a trauma that leaves him mute and in shock. Years later, Asher is all grown up and now looks like handsome leading man Joe Anderson. He's spent the intervening years looking after his mother, but when he hears that Ivan is about to be released from jail, the urge for revenge takes over. Cue a bloody cat and mouse game as Asher takes the fight to Ivan, only to realise that he's bitten off way more than he can chew...

SOMETIMES THEY COME BACK

The starting point for *My Father Die* came not from other revenge films,





"What, this?
Just something
I threw on."

however, but from JM Synge's play, *The Playboy Of The Western World*, originally performed in Dublin in 1907. "The idea spawned from that play. And then I just totally butchered it," Brosnan laughs. "JM Synge is probably rolling in his grave. But in that play, Christy Mahon thinks he's killed his father with a shovel, but the father doesn't die. He comes back..." Likewise, in *My Father Die*, Asher's first attack seems to succeed but (mild spoiler alert), it's not too long before Ivan returns, armed, ready and super-PO'd.

There's no supernatural menace at work here, and Ivan isn't invulnerable, but Stretch plays him as an almost-unstoppable killing machine. "I had worked before with Sean and was amazed with his enormous resources and talent," says Stretch when we ask him what drew him to the role. "Do people like Ivan exist? Yes, they run countries," he says pithily, when we ask him about the character. Brosnan, meanwhile, describes the character as "a really strong-headed menace of a man. He could die, but it's going to take a lot to bring him down. I don't know why, but I had the Black Knight from Monty Python in my head," he laughs, referring to the scene in *Monty Python And The Holy Grail* where a knight is hacked to pieces, but keeps on fighting. "He's like, 'I'll bite your legs off!' He just won't stop."

The moment where Ivan makes his "triumphant" return from the grave was inspired by an urban legend. "When I write, I always start with characters and then I start with a world," says Brosnan. "Certain scenes come into my head, and that was one of them. There's an urban legend: there was a couple at

a hotel in Vegas. They were partying and doing all sorts of nefarious things. Basically, the room started to smell and they're like, 'What is that smell?' So they lift up the mattress and there's a dead body. They've been doing all sorts of terrible things on top of this corpse. And I thought, 'What if the body isn't dead?' That image, and then Ivan in the shed when he's killing Asher's brother – those were the

"When I write, I always start with characters and then I start with a world"

first things that really came to mind. I knew exactly how I wanted that sequence to look and how I wanted to shoot it. And then I was like, 'Okay, that's the catalyst for Asher. That's his goal, to seek revenge.'"

HIGH ON EMOTION

The film shot in Hammond, Louisiana over 18 days – a situation that Brosnan describes simply as "Gruelling... We had long days. I was up at 4am, at home at midnight. I'd wake up and look at the call sheet and I'd be like, 'Oh, good, we're doing this cool, fun, light scene with the detective and the bartender. Cool. It's not too heavy.' But then right after

that, it's: 'Oh, today Ivan is killing his son...' It's not like shooting a comedy. It was very serious on the set. People were having fun, but you could feel the tension."

Two days of this short shoot were taken up with the film's intense, climactic chase sequence. "That was insane," Brosnan admits. "That should have taken two weeks. We just did the best we could with what we had. That sequence was a lot of prep." Despite these shortcomings, the final sequence is a polished highlight in the film, with Ivan coming after Asher in time for the big showdown.

"That was the first chase I ever had to shoot. We shot with two cameras and a GoPro on the motorbike. That was a lot of prep. I storyboarded out the whole chase sequence. It was actually a lot more elaborate, but it got cut down. There was a long, three- or four-mile loop which we decided to shoot. That was going to be our chase road." Finding that location wasn't so easy, however. "I was rocking up one day, walking across someone's property in Hammond in Louisiana, which is... well, you probably shouldn't do that unannounced. Someone came out with a gun. Once we told him what we were doing, he was totally cool with it, but people aren't used to people just walking on their property out there. It's just not the thing to do, especially as I was totally not dressed for that. A buttoned-up shirt, a blazer... Mr Director turning up like," he momentarily affects a posh accent, "'Hello there. Can I shoot outside your property, please?'"

But the real problems came, somewhat unexpectedly, from the animal kingdom.

"There's lots of stray dogs out there and you can't control that situation. We had all these PAs on different points of the road, mainly keeping the dogs back; trying to get dogs out of the road, which was crazy."

Then there was the little matter of an injury that Gary Stretch sustained during the chase sequence. "Gary did almost all his own stunts. And during that chase he ripped a muscle in his back. He did all this crazy stuff, like coming out of the bed and having to flip the mattress with two people on it; getting thrown through walls, getting hit with a shovel – all this mad stuff. And then he pulls his back in the scene with me, where he has to punch me. Gary is just so stoic. He's just... I don't know, you don't get more manly than Gary Stretch. He never complained once."

Despite the injury, filming continued. "And then on the second day of the chase, Gary says 'I've just got to take a break.' I looked over, and he's throwing up. I asked if he was okay and he's just like 'I'm in a bit of pain. Tell me, is there something on my back?' So we look and his back is just black and blue from where he ripped his muscle. I was like, 'Dude, we've got to get you to the hospital. We've got to go now' but he's like 'No, no, no. let's just finish this scene. Don't tell anyone, just shoot it and get it done'. Then he's back on the bike and roaring around at 50 miles an hour, watching out for dogs!"

ROLE CALL

The casting brought with it another set of challenges. While both Stretch and Joe Anderson were on board early on, finding a young actor to play the teenage Asher was trickier, as the actor had to have a very specific set of qualities. "I imagined this older soul trapped in a young kid's body. That's what I wanted. He had to be loveable, and yet he had to be naughty. I wouldn't want my daughter hanging out with him."

Tougher still was finding an actress to play Nana. The role eventually went to Candace Smith – just two days before filming started. "We had an open casting call, and I also had my two casting directors on it – one in New Orleans, and then one in Los Angeles." They reviewed a lot of actors, but Brosnan says that most misunderstood the role of the character. "A lot of people saw her as the victim, and she is in a way. But she's also the strongest character when it comes to being a human being. She's a strong woman, she's a mother, she's caring." Candace won the role because she "was just so natural. I just remember thinking, within 30 seconds of her audition, I was like, 'Okay. Great. We've found her.' And that was it."

The only people who Brosnan says weren't close on set were Joe Anderson and Gary



Stretch – because of instruction from Brosnan. "They didn't talk to each other. I would actually tell Gary, 'Gary, every time you see him, I just want you to fucking eyeball him. If he comes to talk to you, walk away.'"

Unnerved, Anderson asked the director if he'd done something. "He was like, 'Is Gary mad at me?' I was like, 'Good, it's working'."

It could, however, have all turned out very differently. Brosnan originally intended to play Asher himself... "Yeah. Originally, I was

"It's kind of like a Greek tragedy. It plays into mythology, the oedipal complex"

going to do it. I'm so glad I didn't. I always wanted him to be quite sinewy and malnourished and kind of just... to be honest, I just couldn't drop the weight. I have too much of a sweet tooth."

Brosnan met Joe Anderson through producer Orian Williams. "He's produced a lot of good movies. He came on board, and he brought my attention to Joe Anderson. I watched *The Crazies*, and I watched *Across The Universe*. I was like, 'Yeah, this guy is amazing. He is so talented. He has the right look.' I sent him the script, and he got it. He kind of got what I was going for right off the back. He was like, 'It's kind of like a Greek tragedy. It plays into mythology, the oedipal complex.'"

"Because, on a surface level, you could easily say, 'Oh yeah, it's an action-horror', but there are undertones which are, to me, even scarier than what's portrayed on screen. He really tapped into that, I think. When we were talking in the prep phase, we were talking about keeping that little boy quality. Asher has been stunted. His growth has been stunted the minute his brother dies. He's a 12-year-old trapped inside a 27-year-old's body. He just shuts himself down."

Brosnan does still appear in the film, however, as Luke, one of Ivan's gang. The character's crucial scene was directed by Sanja Banic, Brosnan's wife. "I was like, 'Sanja, step in.' She was six months pregnant at the time. She was producing. She produced the film as well. But yes, she stepped on to direct that scene. It was a lot of fun. I didn't plan on being in the film at all, until the day the actor didn't show up. So I was like, 'Ah, OK. I'll jump in.'"

With his southern gothic oedipal revenge horror in the bag, and a young daughter to look after, you'd forgive Brosnan for taking a break. Not so. Next up is a pair of projects: *American Valley* and another, unnamed film, which he describes as a horror thriller. "It's very much in the same vein as *Falling Down*. It's basically about this guy who's a serial killer by night, and by day he's a family man with a job" This time around Brosnan *does* intend to stretch his acting muscles by taking the lead role. "The idea would be to shoot the serial killer/family man one – that's not the title, *Serial Killer/Family Man!* – this year, and then go do *American Valley* next year."

The UK premiere of *My Father Die* will be at Horror Channel FrightFest on 25 August

KNOWING THE BLIND

Director Fede Alvarez tells *Horrorville* why he ditched gore, action and most of the dialogue for new movie *DON'T BREATHE*. By Jordan Farley and Will Salmon

Despite the received wisdom that everybody hates remakes, 2013's take on *The Evil Dead* was a \$97m hit that marked director Fede Alvarez out for potential horror stardom. But while it would have been a safe bet that Alvarez

would return for the sequel, the Uruguayan director took something of a left turn by choosing to work on an original property instead. "I was in San Diego for Comic-Con with my co-writer [Rodo Sayagues] and we started thinking about what would be the follow-up to *The Evil Dead*," says Alvarez. "Not a sequel to that movie – but a movie for the same audience. We wanted to do something that was scary, but we didn't want it to just be another horror movie. The question for us was if there was room to do a classic scary movie that doesn't depend on the supernatural and is based in the real world."

HOME ALONE?

Don't Breathe is that film. A nifty twist on the home invasion genre, it finds three teens, Rocky (Jane Levy), Alex (Dylan Minnette) and Money

(Daniel Zovatto) breaking into the house of a rich blind man (Stephen Lang) in search of the \$300,000 he is said to be hoarding. "Just cos he's blind doesn't mean he's a saint, bro," says Money, early on. He's not wrong – the Blind Man is a very dangerous man indeed with a finely attuned sense of hearing – and once the kids have broken in, he doesn't intend to let them break back out...

For Alvarez, *Don't Breathe* was a response to his work on *Evil Dead* – a film that, even by that franchise's standards, was more than a little gore-soaked. "We wanted to do something that was original. We started from a white page and the question, 'Can we do shocks? Can we do scary without gallons of blood?' It was all about the suspense. The classic movies and the ones that I admire – usually you don't see a drop of blood and they're still terrifying."

Alvarez and Sayagues asked themselves another question early on in the process. "We wondered, 'what if we could pull this off without having a lot of dialogue?' In my eyes, it helps to make the film even more tense."

Crucial to making the film work was creating a convincing house for Rocky and her friends to find



DON'T BREATHE





themselves trapped in. Alvarez and co got together before production had begun to plan out their antagonist's trap. "We laid it all out like a chess board. We thought of the movie like a chess game where someone makes a move, the other one makes a move. Suddenly, it's check. Is it checkmate?"

"That kind of logic was basically what we were following in the movie. In order for that to work, we literally had a drawing on a table of what was going to be the floor plan of the house. We had action figures representing the characters and we put them on the table and worked things out like, 'Okay, the kids are going to come through this door. So if the blind man comes down the stairs, there's just two exits they can go. Let's say they go this way, and the other one goes that way...' As you see in the movie, it's one of those things that if they run in the wrong direction, the whole thing falls apart."

THE SOUND OF SILENCE

That planning is demonstrated in a breathtaking long-take early on in the film that sweeps up through the floorboards to reveal the interior of the house. You'd imagine that something like that would take a long time to plan, but time and budgetary constraints were against the crew. "I think all I had was lunchtime and my iPhone to block the floor," Alvarez laughs. "To pull off something like that, it usually takes lots of time and preparation. But here, it was basically at lunchtime we decided how we were going to do it. And the night before, I think we had plans for some of the trickiest things we knew we wanted to do – like the camera getting into those impossible places. All the actors just learned what they had to do very quickly, which speaks very highly of everybody involved on this movie. We were really working with the best."

The film also makes effective use of sound design throughout. "There's no dialogue in, like, 60 per cent of the movie! In the film, everything goes so silent. It's so quiet. It's incredible to see how the audience... they going for that candy. Everybody freezes up. Nobody wants to make a sound. You have your hand paused inside your popcorn. It just stops and stays there until the end of the scene. It's a really enjoyable thing to do."

Likewise, one scene midway through the film operates in almost total

Stephen Lang plays the tougher-than-expected Blind Man.



darkness. "The script basically said: 'Lights go off; you don't see anything; then a thing happens'" Alvarez explains. "Of course, in film, if there's no light, there's no image. And we definitely want the audience to be aware of what's going on because total darkness in a scenario when you have kids against a blind man, it sets it up for a very particular drama to unfold. We didn't want the audience to be squinting at it and trying to understand what was going on. We wanted the audience to have a clear picture of what was going on."

LEADING THE BLIND

At the centre of this web is Stephen Lang's nameless antagonist. It's a remarkable performance that Alvarez agrees would be "really easy to screw up". As it turns out there was a degree of method involved, as the contacts that Lang was wearing really did render him unable to see throughout filming. "They weren't normal lenses, you can't see clearly with them. They're covering your sight, almost completely. And those sets, they were pretty dark, so

"I think all I had was lunchtime and my iPhone to block the floor!"

really, 80 per cent of his sight really was impaired. By the end of the movie, he knew that set better than anybody. He could just wander around very quickly, knowing where he was going. It was really impressive how he just became that character."

And what of the three young, would-be robbers? It's a good thing that the Blind Man is a serial killer, *Horrorville* suggests, as the three youngsters don't necessarily start off as the most sympathetic characters. It's only when [SPOILER ALERT] one of them is shot that we really start to worry about them.

"Well... that is subjective," Alvarez muses. "I mean, it really depends on who's watching. From day one we knew

DON'T BREATHE



for her. "Most of the time she prefers to do it that way," he insists. "Actors don't like to have to fake it all the time. In this movie you rarely see her fake it. Most of the time, she's really under pressure and stressed by what's going on and the difficulty of the things she has to do."

"At the end of the day, the pain and the suffering of the actors is temporary," Alvarez says. "But the enjoyment of the audience, hopefully, can last forever – and it's more important for me to entertain the audience than to keep the actors having a good time."

With *Don't Breathe* in the can and already notching up some impressive pre-release buzz, Alvarez is looking forwards to his next project. That *Evil Dead* sequel is still in limbo, with the franchise currently being driven by the excellent *Ash Vs The Evil Dead* TV show, but he hasn't written off the idea of returning, with talk even suggesting that the reboot universe and Sam Raimi's original may eventually intertwine. For now, though, he's looking for a new project – and that may or may not be horror. "For me, it's always about finding a story that I can't wait to go and shoot. I'm not a fan of shooting. I'm not like, 'I can't wait to go back on set.' I need to find that story that really excites me. So far, it's been *The Evil Dead* and it's been this one. But I'm definitely interested in exploring other things. I don't see myself doing a screwball comedy anytime soon, but I'll definitely think around the stuff that I grew up watching and loving – which is basically the '80s stuff, I guess." ■

Deep Breath is in UK cinemas from 26 August.



that we wanted to make a story about robbers. We were aware that some people would react like that. But I don't feel that way. Maybe because I come from South America and I come from a different reality where most people who are doing that, they're not doing that because they're evil. They do that because they have no other option. It's what they need to do to survive. I'm not advocating for that, obviously, but what the movie was doing, was trying to show you: look, this is reality for these kids and they're trying to break away from that. They believe that life has been unfair to them, and because of that, they believe they have a right to change things and make their own laws. And the Blind Man thinks just like them. He couldn't agree more with them."

But surely the kids bring some of this on themselves when they break into the Blind Man's house? "That's something I find fascinating, watching online, the debate and reaction from people to the trailer. Some people go, 'Well, it's what they deserve', but most people think 'Well, you don't deserve to

be shot just because you walk into someone's house'. It's an ongoing debate in this country and in many places of the world."

KEEPING IT REAL

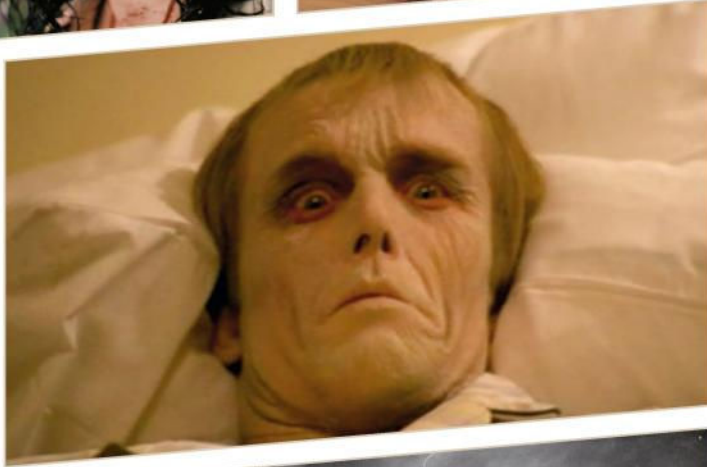
The young cast – Jane Levy's Rocky in particular – are certainly put through the wringer over the course of the film's taut, 88-minute running time. And this wasn't a case where the intensity on screen was leavened by the cast and crew joking around off camera. "I prefer not to have a set where you cut and everybody bursts into laughter," Alvarez says. "You've seen horror movies where that's the mood on set and most of the time they're not scary. I really have to put my actors through an intense experience and make it as tough for them as possible, but in the best way possible – meaning I'll try to make it real for them. If Jane has to crawl through a tight space for a long time, well, it'll be a real tight space that she'll have to crawl through. There's no CGI to make it easier for her."

Levy, for her part, was a trooper, embracing the challenges Alvarez set

TOP
Jane Levy and Dylan Minnette play two of the young burglars.

ABOVE
Lang wore special contact lenses for the part, so he really is nearly blind throughout the film...

TOP 50





50

MUST-SEE HORROR MOVIES

What better way to celebrate our very first issue than with a big old poll? The following films represent some of the scariest - and best - films ever made, and helped define a genre. By Penny Archer, Sam Ashurst, Sarah Dobbs, Jamie Graham, Philip Kemp, Steve O'Brien and Will Salmon.



THE BEYOND (1981)

The eyes have it

50 Notorious for an especially nasty throat-slitting sequence, the second of Fulci's "Gates of Hell" trilogy is a gruesome high-point in the director's career. 60 years ago, everyone in a New Orleans hotel vanished without trace. Liza (Catriona MacColl) is the new owner and she's keen to make things work. She should have probably chosen a different career path, or at least another location. Turns out her hotel is on top of one of the gates to Hell (that's what happens when you don't check TripAdvisor) and it's not long before tarantulas are crawling into mouths, eyes are being popped and dogs are munching down on human necks. It's schlock, undoubtedly, but enjoyable schlock – and you can't fault Fulci's inventive nastiness. **WS**

THE HAUNTING (1963)

House of mysteries

49 There's so much about *The Haunting* that shouldn't work. It's a movie draped in cliché, from the forbidding gothic mansion to the stereotypical guests invited there by paranormal investigator John Markway (Richard Johnson), and yet it's truly brilliant.

What's remarkable is how little actually happens. The film is almost entirely made of implied threat. Director Robert Wise, whose career took in titles as diverse as *The Sound of Music* and *Star Trek: The Motion Picture*, makes the house itself a character. Without resorting to effects, he suggests a malignant sentience in Hill House. That Wise served his apprenticeship under the master of suggestion, Val Lewton, should come as no surprise. **S'OB**

POLTERGEIST (1982)

The family-friendly chiller that still freaks out the grownups

48 The rumours of who really called the shots on *Poltergeist* will no doubt rage on. Is it a Tobe Hooper film, or did producer Steven Spielberg really take charge? Whatever the truth is, it remains one of the grisliest and scariest movies ever rated PG in the US. Its brilliance is that it all feels so connected to normality. The Freeings are an average family and to have the enemy spirits enter this realm through the TV was a genius move. **S'OB**



SAW (2004)

The low budget thriller that conquered the world

47 It's easy to overlook *Saw* these days. Across eight features (with a ninth in production), the franchise became increasingly played out.

And yet, there's no doubting the effectiveness of the original. Adam (Leigh Whannell) awakes to find himself chained to a pipe with Cary Elwes's Dr Lawrence Gordon similarly shackled up opposite him, and a corpse on the floor between them. The two soon realise that they have fallen prey of the "Jigsaw Killer" and must figure out one of his fiendish puzzles if they want to survive. Of course, things aren't quite that straightforward, and the final reveal spins the entire film on its head rather neatly.

Made for just \$1.3m, *Saw* was an instant phenomenon that took \$103m at the box office and made the young James Wan's career (he's since gone on to cement his mainstream horror credentials with the likes of *Insidious* and *The Conjuring*). But more than that, it remains a genuinely tight and impressive thriller. While the sequels have burdened the franchise with an ever-more-convoluted backstory, there's something lean, stripped-down and satisfyingly nasty about the original that makes it worth revisiting again. **WS**





WOLF CREEK (2005)

Rural horror that's the natural successor to Texas Chain Saw...

46 This Australian serial killer thriller was dismissed by some, at the time, for the brutal treatment of its characters – particularly the women. And yet, *Wolf Creek* isn't just another exploitation flick, and time has seen it reappraised as the horrible classic that it is.

It's set in the Outback – a still relatively under-explored setting in horror cinema – and director Greg McLean conjures terrific performances from his small cast of unlucky backpackers, stranded when their car breaks down. Apparent rescue comes in the form of affable redneck Mick Taylor (John Jarratt) – until he drugs the trio and takes them back to his place to indulge his secret passion for torture. It's a memorable turn that marks Taylor out as sort of evil Crocodile Dundee.

Genuinely stomach-churning at times, *Wolf Creek* is a clearly indebted to Tobe Hooper and *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*, but with an added sense of the uncanny thanks to its fantastic location work in the (real) Wolfe Creek Crater in Western Australia. Its claims to be based on true events are fanciful, but the film does tap into the horribly credible feel of an urban legend. Mick Taylor would continue his reign of terror in two solid, but naturally less surprising, sequels. **WS**



YOU'RE NEXT (2011)

Adam Wingarde puts a twist on the home invasion genre

45 *You're Next* opens with a now over-familiar scene in horror cinema: a family being butchered in their home by a group of masked intruders. Where it goes next, however, is... surprising.

Inspired as much by Agatha Christie as the likes of *The Strangers*, Adam Wingarde's breakout success is much more than it first appears. Sure, the kills are frequent and bloody, but there's also a cunning plot at work here. And, for once, the film gives the beleaguered heroes a fighting chance. As shit gets real, Erin (Sharni Vinson) gets increasingly irate – with hilarious, explosive results. It's immensely satisfying. *You're Next* celebrates the home invasion genre and marked Wingarde out for greatness. **WS**

JACOB'S LADDER (1990)

Horror to hurt heads

44 It's hard to credit that this mindfuck of a movie was penned by the same screenwriter, Bruce Joel Rubin, who scribbled *Ghost*. Shuffling past, present and future, reality and fantasy, *Jacob's Ladder* swirls around Tim Robbins' befuddled Vietnam vet Jacob, his trauma compounded by a failed marriage and dead child. What really happened in Vietnam? Is somebody now trying to kill him? And do the faceless demons pursuing him truly exist? Such hall-of-splintered-mirrors, paradigm-shifting entertainment might be the norm today, but in 1990 this sank egg whisks into viewers' brains, and immediately became a cult hit. Still startlingly effective, it's currently being "reimagined". **JG**

THE CABIN IN THE WOODS (2012)

That's no coffee cup...

43 Joss Whedon's fingerprints are all over this "loving hate letter" to modern horror, even though directorial duties went to *Cloverfield*-scripter Drew Goddard. Designed as a reaction to the then-prevalent gorno movement, *Cabin* is an Easter Egg laden throwback to '80s horror with more than a few surprises up its sleeve. Throwing in a whole menagerie of horror monsters, it starts out as campy fun, but closes on a moment of angry profundity. **WS**





NIGHT OF THE DEMON (1957)

Train spotting

42 Director Jacques Tourneur had made his name with a run of films that focussed more on psychological horror than monsters. And for most of *Night Of The Demon*, that's what you get – until the movie's climax, which, after the long, suggestive build-up, plonks a “real” demon on screen. The result of a creative clash between Tourneur and his producer Hal E. Chester which the director lost, the shot is the sole stumble in a movie whose reputation has only grown in the past six decades. **S'OB**

[•REC] (2007)

News slash

41 This Spanish zombie film gave the found footage genre a much-needed shot in the arm back in the late noughties. A TV reporter and her cameraman are filming the night shift at a local fire station when the crew are called out on an emergency. Accompanying them, they soon discover that this isn't a cat stuck in a tree. A mysterious virus has broken out, similar to rabies, that transforms the infected into feral, ravenous killers. The story may be a little thin, but it's executed brilliantly in this short, sharp and utterly terrifying thrill ride. **WS**

AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON (1981)

A bad moon rising

40 John Landis originally conceived his genre-jumping monster movie back in 1969 but went off to establish himself as a box office draw in Hollywood with *The Blues Brothers* and *Animal House* before he could finally get it made. Financiers were worried it was too scary for a comedy and too funny for a horror. Endlessly quotable, as some American backpackers don't heed the warnings of the locals at the Slaughtered Lamb, the transformation FX are impressive even today, bagging Rick Baker the inaugural Oscar for Best Makeup. The tube sequence is petrifying, the visits from undead Jack (Griffin Dunne) and David's (David Naughton) victims are hilarious, while the ending still makes us cry. **PA**

28 DAYS LATER... (2002)

When the Wyndham blows

39 The rampagers of Danny Boyle's visceral Brit-horror aren't actually dead, just infected with a Rage virus, but most of everything else about *28 Days Later...* keeps to the Romero zombie model. There's the struggle for survival in desolate cities, the scramble for provisions, the dog-eat-dog survivalism – and some very bloody, brutal deaths. There's a healthy sprinkling of John Wyndham's *Day Of The Triffids* here, and some Terry Nation there, but it's unmistakably a Danny Boyle product, with the pace and brutality he's known for. Only the upbeat ending lets it down – a misstep driven by preview audiences rejecting the original, bleak finale. Both Boyle and writer Alex Garland have called that the “true ending”. **S'OB**

A GIRL WALKS HOME ALONE AT NIGHT (2014)

Sex, drugs and '80s pop

38 Cool, sexy and with a soundtrack to die for, this self-styled “Iranian vampire western” (actually shot in California) is one of the most original films in years. Told in glorious black and white it's the story of Arash (Arash Marandi), a young man in the aptly named Bad City and his encounters with a mysterious girl (Sheila Vand). Shifting between pulp adventure, oblique mystery thriller and outright horror story, Ana Lily Amirpour's directorial debut is seductive, strange and utterly unmissable. Its a self-consciously cool film, its heroine decked out in trainers, stripey shirt and with a killer vinyl collection, but that never crosses over into smugness. Essential. **WS**

PEEPING TOM (1960)

The masterpiece that finished off a career

37 It's hard to shock people these days, but 1960's audiences – or more specifically critics – were so vexed by *Peeping Tom* that they set out to destroy director Michael Powell's career. Not because the film is bad – it's now rightly considered a masterpiece – but because it makes us, the viewers, voyeurs as lonely filmmaker Mark begins his murder spree in London. Most killer thrillers let us sit back and enjoy the carnage, free from any connection to the killer. *Peeping Tom* forces you to see things through Mark's eyes and even feel sympathy for him. Alas, it would take a positive reappraisal by Martin Scorsese before the film received the praise it deserved, and by that time Powell's career was all but over. **WS**

IT FOLLOWS (2014)

'80s throwback horror that also looks to the future

36 David Robert Mitchell's '80s-flavoured horror may be deeply indebted to *Halloween* and *A Nightmare On Elm Street* but it's no mere pastiche. When Jay (Maika Monroe) has sex with her new boyfriend she contracts a demonic curse that means she will be perpetually followed, at walking pace, by a face-shifting monster – until she sleeps with someone else. Despite this premise, there's not a hint of exploitation here. Instead, *It Follows* is a paranoid masterpiece that taps into fears of stalkers and STIs as much as the supernatural. You spend each scene nervously watching the background, waiting for someone to walk towards the characters. And with its crumbling Detroit locations and unnerving score, *It Follows* is a sensory treat. **WS**

THE FLY (1986)

Be afraid... The insect is awake

35 Reimagining the 1958 movie in which a fly and a scientist swap heads, screenwriter Charles Edward Pogue posited a fusion on a DNA level, leading to a prolonged (and exceedingly icky) transmutation. Who better to direct than David Cronenberg, whose *Shivers*, *Rabid* and *The Brood* had established him as the doyen of disease? "Let yourself go, don't hold back" urged producer Mel Brooks, though he couldn't have expected Seth Brundle (Jeff Goldblum) to pop his penis in a jar after it fell off. Spectacularly gory, *The Fly* is also heartrendingly tender as journalist Veronica Quaife (Geena Davis) watches her man melt into a blob of pustulating flesh. "I see it as talking about mortality... and the tragedy of human loss," said Cronenberg. Incredibly, it was a smash, taking \$60m. **JG**

FREAKS (1932)

Who'd want to be normal?

34 "Give me something that will out-horror *Frankenstein*," MGM studio boss Irving Thalberg demanded of director Tod Browning, whose *Dracula* had just been trumped by Universal's rival offering. He got it – and much more than he bargained for...

Set in a travelling circus, the film is cast using genuine 'freaks' – a limbless man, Siamese twins, a hermaphrodite and more – whom Browning treats with empathy and affection. The baddies are the 'normals' – the beautiful trapeze artist who seduces a dwarf when he comes into money, planning to poison him, and the strongman who's her secret lover – and when the freaks discover the scheme they wreak a horrendous revenge on the pair. MGM, appalled, dumped the film (it wasn't seen in Britain until the '60s, around the same time that it was being reappraised as a cult classic in the States) and Browning's career never recovered. But with its vividly-depicted milieu – Browning knew circuses well, as he'd started out working in one after running away from home at the age of 16 – and macabre humour, it now looks like his masterpiece. **PK**



THE BLAIR WITCH PROJECT (1999)

If they'd just taken a phone...

33 Take three unknown actors, give them a couple of cameras, and dump them in the middle of the woods without a script... It should've been a recipe for disaster, but *The Blair Witch Project* became one of the most notorious horrors of the 1990s.

Best known now for the scene in which amateur filmmaker Heather Donahue snots out a desperate apology to the families of her crew members, it's a brilliant exercise in the power of suggestion. There's never anything out in the woods except directors Daniel Myrick and Eduardo Sánchez making spooky noises and rustling tents at 3am, but the poor actors are all so convincingly terrified and worn down through lack of sleep that their fear is contagious and never less than convincing. A clever marketing strategy (including a straight-faced website detailing the facts of the filmmakers' disappearance) meant that some audiences thought the events of the film were real. Maybe people were just more credulous in the '90s, but even now, there's an authenticity to the film that's chilling. A sequel, *Book Of Shadows*, was less successful, but perhaps Adam Wingard's upcoming threequel will fare better. **SD**

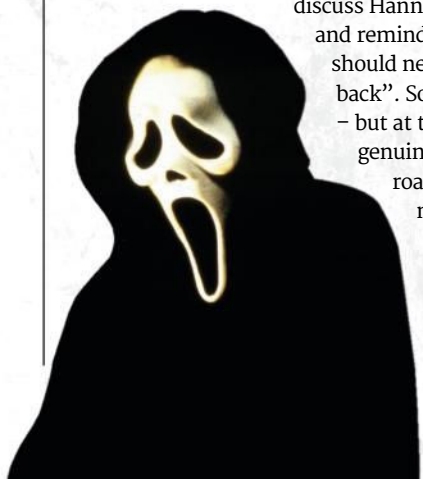


SCREAM (1996)

Carve-up sent up...

32 Wes Craven's classic isn't just a horror movie – it's a horror movie about horror movies.

Or as Roger Ebert put it, "*Scream* is self-deconstructing; it's like one of those cans that heats its own soup." The characters have seen all the horror classics, they know the clichés, they discuss Hannibal Lecter's motivation and remind each other that you should never say "I'll be right back". So the film sends itself up – but at the same time it's genuinely scary, with the killer roaming around in a white mask based on Munch's famous painting and offing people if they can't answer questions about – guess what – horror movies. **PK**



THE INNOCENTS (1961)

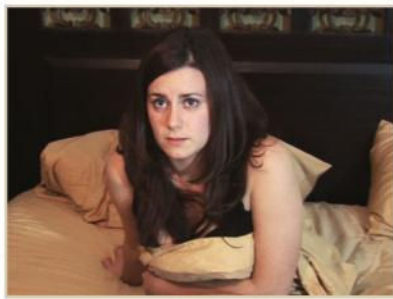
Jack Clayton turns the screw

31 Henry James' *The Turn Of The Screw* is one of the great literary ghost stories, and Jack Clayton's stylish adaptation more than does it justice. Captured in dreamy black-and-white, it's the tale of governess Miss Giddens (Deborah Kerr) taking on the care of two children following the death of their previous carer, Miss Jessel, and her equally corpsified consort, Peter Quint. As strange things begin to happen around the house, Giddens becomes convinced that the spirits of the dead lovers are trying to claim the souls of the children – but who is the real danger in the house? Beautifully shot and, crucially, still nerve-freezingly terrifying, *The Innocents* is a timeless classic with one hell of an ending. **WS**

MARTYRS (2008)

Torture to watch

30 There are some films that test the strongest of stomachs. *Martyrs* must rank as one of the toughest, bleakest and most deeply unpleasant films ever made. We mean that in a good way. For while Pascal Laugier's tale of Anna (Morjana Alaoui) enduring a cycle of torture and abuse at the hands of a group of mysterious captors is genuinely stomach churning and divided critics (after an extremely rocky road to production where most studios refused to go near the film), it is not without a point. It's a deeply depressing but undeniably powerful exploration of violence that (unlike most horror films) refuses to let you enjoy the pain even a tiny bit. *Martyrs* forces you to identify with its heroines and, in its own strange way, has a nihilistic morality. **WS**



PARANORMAL ACTIVITY (2007)

Found footage frights

29 Shot on a basic digital camera, using a cast of unknowns, and with director Oren Peli's own house as its primary location, *Paranormal Activity* is a masterclass in low-budget filmmaking. As spooked couple Katie Featherston and Micah Sloat attempt to catch their supernatural pest on tape, the film's cheapness becomes its greatest strength; it's so pared down, there's nothing to distract you from the scares. Those scares start off simply – a slammed door here, a snatched bedsheet there – but Peli ratchets the tension up so high that they become terrifying. And then, when you've got used to scrutinising every inch of the frame for supernatural shenanigans, the haunting kicks off in earnest. This is *The Amityville Horror* for the selfie generation: now, even moving out of the house won't save you. Brrrrrr. **SD**

KWAIDAN (1964)

Almost too beautiful to be scary

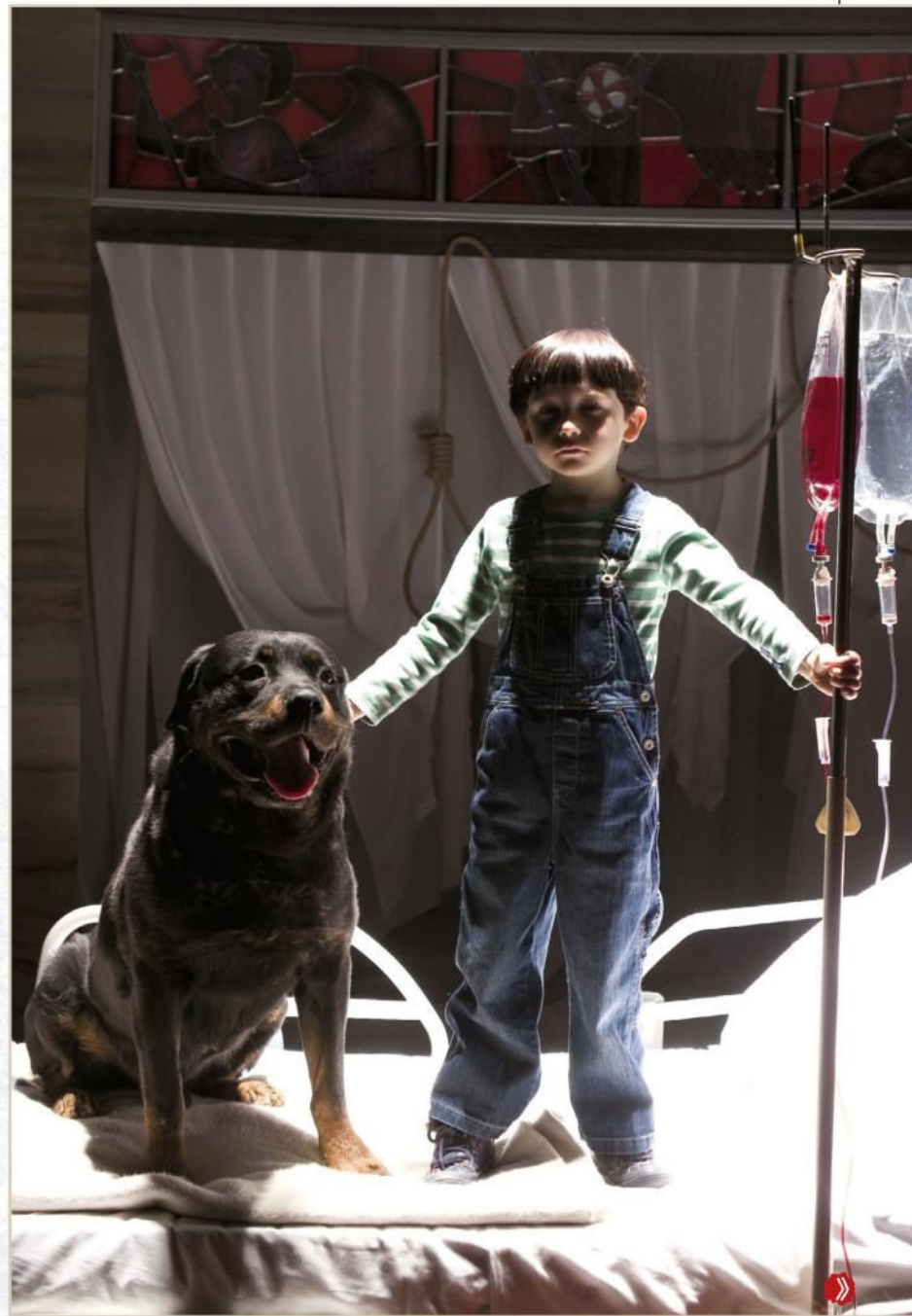
28 From director Masaki Kobayashi, known for his socially conscious dramas and intense samurai epics, *Kwaidan* comes as something of a surprise. His first film in colour, it adapts four ghost stories by writer Lafcadio Hearn. Shot entirely on sets constructed inside a disused aircraft hangar, it rejects naturalism with everything stylised to the nth degree, as is the score, on which Kobayashi worked for six months with composer Toru Takemitsu to produce eerie and unsettling tones. From the elegiac sorrow of "Black Hair" through the icy remoteness of "Woman Of The Snow" and the implacable malice of "Hoichi the Earless" to the sardonic humour of "In A Cup of Tea", each tale sustains its own individual mood... but all are hauntingly beautiful. **PK**

THE OMEN (1976)

The devil's business

27 Back in the '70s, after *The Exorcist* scored an astonishing 10 Oscar nominations and broke box-office records, studios and stars took a sudden interest in horror, so often considered the poor relation.

The Omen cost 20th Century Fox a cool \$25m and starred Gregory Peck and Lee Remick as the parents of Damien Thorn, an infant antichrist (and we don't just mean he has a bad case of the terrible twos). Like Italian gialli and US slasher movies, *The Omen* is all about the death-dealing set-pieces, and few horror movies rack up so many memorable kills – the standouts being a slo-mo decapitation of David Warner by a hurtling sheet of glass, and former Doctor Who Patrick Troughton being impaled by a church lightning rod. Add in a Jerry Goldsmith apocalyptic score (his only Oscar win from 18 nominations) and you have a classic that spawned three sequels and, in 2006, a godawful remake. **JG**





SUSPIRIA (1977)

Terror in Technicolor

26 It's a cliché to describe a horror movie as nightmarish, but if any film ever deserved that descriptor, it's *Suspiria*. Despite the apparently simple plot – a foreign student arrives at a dance school only to find that the pupils are being killed off by something sinister – it's got an unearthly, dreamlike quality that makes it genuinely unnerving. Visually, it's beautiful, even at its goriest. The production design is lavish, and there was clearly plenty of room in the budget for fake blood; rather than hide anything in the shadows, director Dario Argento bathes every scene in neon light. Aurally, too, it's pretty special, with a discordant electronic score by Goblin. It's got so much style and swagger that minor script foibles (like Udo Kier's psychologist awkwardly reeling off a history of witchcraft) can be easily forgiven. Argento never made another film like it, but who has? **SD**

THE DESCENT (2005)

Going underground

23 Dog Soldiers established Neil Marshall (these days probably better known for helming some of the very finest episodes of *Game Of Thrones*) as a talented young director with a taste for black comedy. His second film, *The Descent*, however, was an altogether different beast. There was precious little humour to be found in this gruelling tale of a caving expedition gone very badly wrong: it starts with tragedy and gets bleaker from there. The all-female cast are put through their paces as vile "crawlers" – flesh-eating humanoid – pursue them through a network of caves, and Marshall ramps up the tension before deploying a gut-punch ending that was so potent it was entirely cut from the US version. A solid, if less punishingly effective, sequel followed in 2009. **WS**

THE BABADOOK (2014)

A stunning debut that chills the bones

25 Jennifer Kent's astonishing feature debut is part possession tale, part bleak motherhood drama and part Tim Burton fantasy gone terribly wrong. It's the story of Amelia (Essie Davis), a bereaved widow struggling to bring up her son Samuel (an old-before-his-time Noah Wiseman). Things are tough enough without the arrival of Mister Babadook, the sinister storybook character that Samuel becomes obsessed with, and eventually frightened by, when he finds a mysterious book. Initially chalking it up to an over-active imagination, Amelia throws the book in the garbage, only for it to reappear the next day. It soon becomes clear that there's something sinister afoot here...

Davis plays the role of Amelia with total conviction – by turns terrified and terrifying. As the film progresses you start to wonder if she is more of a threat to Samuel than the possibly mythical Babadook. But when we finally do meet the beast it's genuinely alarming. Both cutesy and horrifying, he's one of the most original screen monsters for many a year. None other than William Friedkin, director of *The Exorcist*, has cited it, saying "I've never seen a more frightening film." Now that's high praise. **WS**



EVIL DEAD II (1987)

Chainsaws at the ready...

22 *The Evil Dead* was a substantial success for the young Sam Raimi. Sure, it hadn't set US box offices alight, but it did make money (around \$2.6m on a budget of around \$400,000) and it operated as the perfect test run for his directorial skills. That said, he was keen to spread his wings. Partnering with the Coen Brothers, Raimi got to work on thriller *Crimewave*, consciously avoiding a sequel to his debut, despite the advice of publicist Irvin Shapiro. When *Crimewave* tanked, however, Raimi changed his tune...

Evil Dead II is a virtual remake of the original, with Bruce Campbell once again playing the hapless Ash. The difference here, however, was in the tone. Where *The Evil Dead* was exuberantly nasty (going too far for some, including the director, in one infamous scene), *Evil Dead II* has a lightness of touch. Threequel *Army Of Darkness* would slip into straight-up comedy, but this second instalment finds the perfect balance between freaky deadite horror and winking, chainsaw-wielding fun. *Evil Dead II* set the tone for the likes of *Shaun Of The Dead* while working as an effective chiller in its own right. And Bruce Campbell is superb. **WS**



POSSESSION (1981)

The one with the squid

24 Finding out that your partner has been cheating on you is tough. Whether it's with a friend, the milkman or – as in the case of Andrzej Żuławski's *Possession* – a sort of demon squid thing, infidelity can be crushing. International spy Mark (Sam Neill) and his wife Anna (Isabelle Adjani) are trying to rebuild their shattered relationship, but the increasingly paranoid Mark hires a private investigator to track Anna, with deadly results. Artfully mixing absurdist body horror with the horrible reality of a disintegrating relationship and the politics of its Berlin setting, *Possession* may be best known for its gruesome sexuality, but it's a punishing, genuinely frightening film and a clear forerunner of films like Lars Von Trier's *Antichrist*. **WS**

EYES WITHOUT A FACE (1960)

Art horror that cuts more than skin deep

21 Elegant, beautiful, terrifying: that's Georges Franju's French face-lift thriller. The brilliant surgeon Dr. Génessier and his daughter Christiane are involved in a car accident that leaves her face horribly scarred. Faking Christiane's death, Génessier keeps his daughter locked up at home, while at night he goes hunting the streets of Paris for someone with the right face to steal for her. While Britain's Hammer films were proving popular with French audiences at the time, Franju's film was entirely different from his UK contemporaries and, arguably, far scarier. He matches his obvious eye for a beautiful shot with a none-more-dark premise and heartbreaking performances. **WS**

HALLOWEEN (1978)

Scares in the suburbs

20 You only have to take a cursory glance at Rob Zombie's fatally misconceived 2007 remake of *Halloween* to understand what's so precious about John Carpenter's peerless original. He wasn't interested in psychoanalysing his Michael Myers. For Carpenter, the Shape (as Myers is referred to in the film's credits) is an unstoppable force of nature.

There's a lot of Hitchcock in *Halloween*'s slithering camerawork and a lot of B-movie producer Roger Corman in its unfussy, fat-free storytelling. It made a star out of Jamie Lee Curtis, who debuted here as Laurie Strode, the unlucky teenager stalked by the Shatner-masked menace, and who would return to the character in three of the inevitably inferior sequels.

While *Halloween* may shy from the luridness of its exploitation, drive-in stablemates, it shares their zip and focus, while menace and threat drip from every frame. It's a film where shifting volumes of darkness and light are used to suggest something sinister, and coupled with its minimal electro score (composed by Carpenter himself), it's a fine example of the "less is more" school of shocks. **S'OB**

PSYCHO (1960)

Mother isn't quite herself

19 Hitchcock had made plenty of films that had audiences on the edge of their seats – but never before one that had people hiding under them, screaming.

Noting the success Roger Corman was having in the States, and Hammer in the UK, Hitch decided to show these upstarts what a real master could do with the genre and, when Paramount balked at the idea, financed it himself, shooting fast in B&W with his pared-down television team. That wasn't the only rule he broke: who else would dare kill off his star (Janet Leigh) 40 minutes in? And then decree that no one was allowed in once the movie had started? Just "a fun picture", as Hitch termed it, *Psycho* alienated many critics, but the public flocked, and it set a template for horror movies for decades to come. **PK**



VIDEODROME (1983)

Long live the new flesh

17 Described by Andy Warhol as "A Clockwork Orange for the '80s" and by Roger Ebert as "one of the least entertaining films of all time", *Videodrome* is archetypal David Cronenberg, a freaky fusion of philosophy and politics, technology and flesh. James Woods excels as a cable TV programmer who obsesses over the hardcore S&M images he's intermittently accessing, and pursues the titular program only to be persistently blocked. Naturally he winds up with a vaginal slot in his stomach into which he inserts videotapes... Also featuring a haunting turn by Debbie Harry as Max's pain-seeking girlfriend with cigarette burns on her breasts, this nightmarish work brands the back of your eyeballs with images that won't scrub off. **JG**

NIGHT OF THE LIVING DEAD (1968)

They're coming to get you...

18 The granddaddy of modern zombie movies is now a stupefying 48 years old. That means there's more time between its release and now than there is between it and the original *Nosferatu*. That it remains so gut-wrenchingly terrifying is a testament to how revolutionary George A. Romero's garage horror flick was. Though its direct sequel, the more struttily satirical *Day Of The Dead*, gets more plaudits, *Night Of The Living Dead* remains the scarier and the rawer of the two. The murky black-and-white photography and sizzingly contemporary civil rights subtext give it a forceful power, and the ending, as bleak and depressing as it is, remains one of the great movie closers, a perfect capping of the film's themes that is, horribly, still relevant. Just one thing: avoid with your life the 30th anniversary redux, with newly added – and cringingly jarring – scenes courtesy of original screenwriter John A. Russo. **S'OB**



ERASERHEAD (1977)

In Heaven, everything is fine

16 David Lynch's B&W debut drew inspirations from art (Franz Kafka, Nikolai Gogol, Francis Bacon) and life (living in a troubled part of Philadelphia) and fashioned them into one of the most nightmarish films imaginable. The story revolves around tortured soul Henry (Jack Nance), living in an industrial hellhole and trying to raise a mutant baby who looks like a skinned lamb. Clogged with surreal imagery – a cooked chicken that wriggles and oozes blood, a woman who lives behind the radiator – and discordant sound design, *Eraserhead* is a nightmare in a damaged brain. If you want to know the true strangeness of the brain that dreamt it up, consider what Lynch said in 2014: "I love the world of *Eraserhead*. I would love to live in that world." **JG**



DON'T LOOK NOW (1973)

(Young) lady in red

15 You'll know the iconography of *Don't Look Now*, even if you've never seen the film.

Venice. A hooded child in red. Donald Sutherland running around like crazy. That sex scene... Thankfully, Nicolas Roeg's tale of grief, psychic powers and a knife-wielding dwarf is much more than that. Sutherland and Julie Christie are brilliant and heartbreaking as John and Laura, the bereaved couple who travel to Venice the year after their young daughter Christine drowns. Just as they're beginning to rebuild their life, however, John begins to see fleeting glimpses of a child who *may* be Christine. It all builds to one of the most famous climaxes in cinema history – and no, we're still not talking about that sex scene). **WS**

CARRIE (1976)

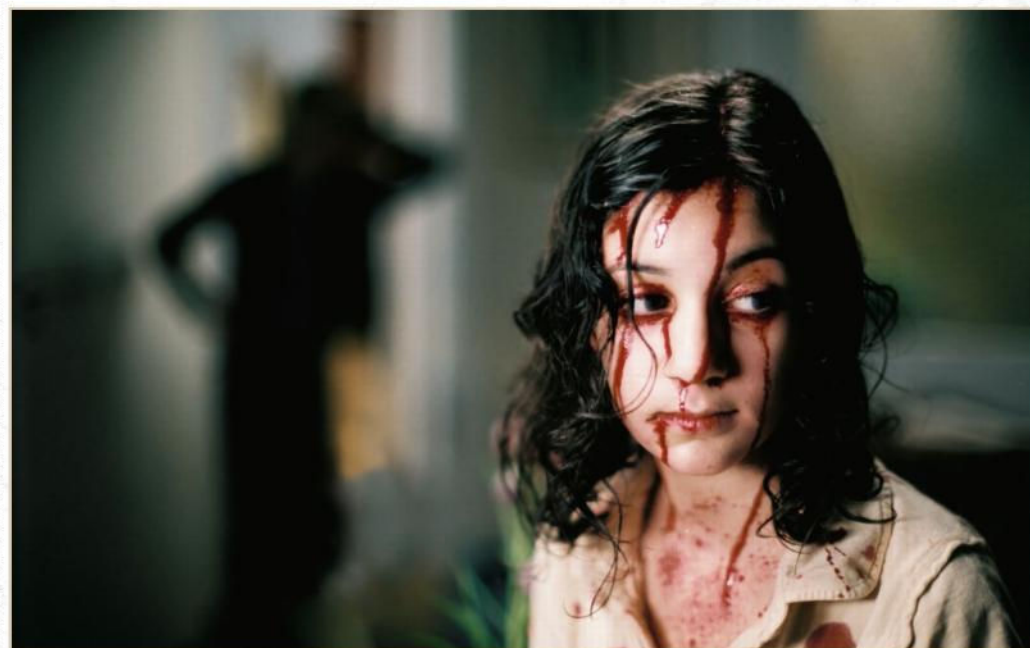
There will be blood

13 Tarantino's eighth favourite movie was the first Stephen King adaptation. It's one hell of a start, with Brian De Palma's tornado technique swirling around a heartbreaking turn from Sissy Spacek. She plays Carrie White, a painfully shy teen who's targeted by bullies at school (Nancy Allen, John Travolta) and returns home each night to a religious-zealot mom (Piper Laurie). But she can move things with her mind, a gift/curse that reaches a devastating head when all of Carrie's pain and rage is unleashed at the school prom... Spacek and Laurie were nominated for Oscars (unusual for a horror movie) and the former should have won – she certainly suffered for her art, insisting that it was she who was buried alive ready for the iconic hand-from-grave climax. **JG**

LET THE RIGHT ONE IN (2008)

Love in a cold climate

14 What's the sound of snow falling in the darkness? Tiny bubbles in mineral water, sugar grains scattering on marble, according to director Tomas Alfredson in the commentary to his delicate, intimate vampire love story about a bullied little boy and the strange companion, Eli, he meets in the snow one night. It's set in the suburbs of Stockholm in the 1980s, and location is vitally important to Alfredson's adaptation of John Ajvide Lindqvist's novel of the same name (*Låt den rätte komma*, in Swedish); the grey apartment blocks, lonely climbing frame where the two meet and of course the shocking contrast of blood on snow. Alfredson made some significant changes from the novel – bringing ambiguity over Eli's gender and her minder Haxan's intentions – but it only increases the layers to a horror which is as cerebral and emotional as it is visceral. No wonder it was voted the best scarer of the 21st Century so far by Film4. Matt Reeves' US remake, *Let Me In*, is worthwhile too, but lacks the same shock of the new that Alfredson conjured with this beautifully sinister movie. **PA**



A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET (1984)

Meet the man of your dreams

12 Looked at rationally, Freddy Krueger is more ridiculous than scary: he's just a man with a melted face. But Krueger isn't rational. He's a figure from a nightmare who strikes when his victims are asleep, using their fears against them. Wes Craven's teen slasher is a surreal slice of psychological terror that builds a complex mythology out of primal fears. It attacks from every angle, folding childish fears into adolescent anxieties about growing up, having sex, and discovering that parents can't always be trusted. Heather Langenkamp's Nancy is one of the genre's fiercest final girls, but the film's biggest triumph is turning what should be the safest place in the world – in bed, under the covers – into a demon's playground. **SD**

ALIEN (1979)

Tummy trouble

11 Ridley Scott's deep space stalker remains a peerless slice of sci-fi horror. The plot (a bunch of space truckers set down on an uninhabited world and pick up something nasty) is pure B-movie, but Scott's direction, the queasily sexual creature design by artist HR Giger, and Roger Christian's sets – epic in scale on LV-426, and panic-inducingly claustrophobic on the *Nostramo* – add up to a film of immense craft. And then there's the chestbuster... **WS**

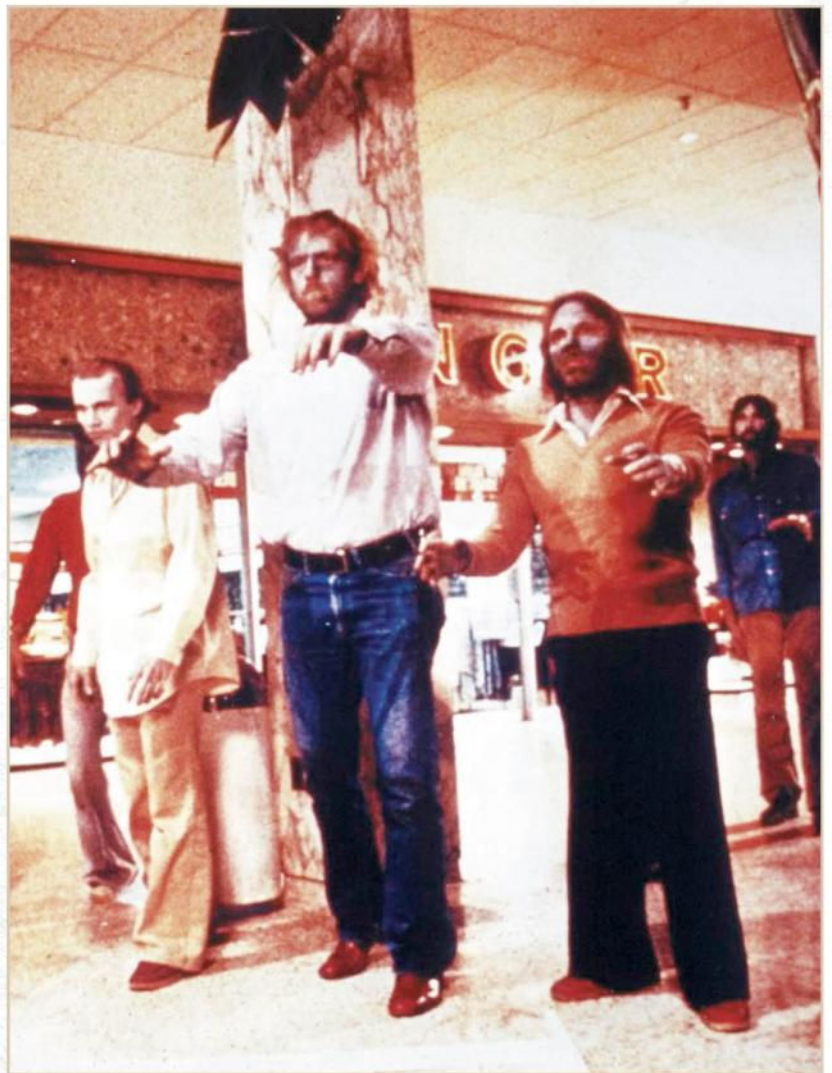


DAWN OF THE DEAD (1978)

The greatest zombie movie of all time

10 While *Night Of The Living Dead* arguably created the modern zombie movie, wresting it away from voodoo and witchcraft, *Dawn* saw the sub-genre mature. *Dawn Of The Dead* builds on the world and tone of *Night Of The Living Dead* but moves the action out of a single house and into the wider world. Romero shows us glimpses of a convincing and frightening apocalypse, before settling his new group of survivors down in a vast shopping mall. It's here that the film comes into its own, as the survivors start to live a life of luxury, looting the wares of a fallen civilisation, little noticing that they are becoming little more than complacent consumers, zombies themselves, of a different sort – until reality bites back.

The film's influence is huge. Without *Dawn* there'd be no *Walking Dead* in comics or on TV, no *28 Days Later...*, and certainly no *Shaun Of The Dead*. Many may have tried to wrest the bloody crown from Romero's second classic, but none have succeeded. Witty, weird and fantastically nasty in places, *Dawn Of The Dead* may seem rather quaint and on the nose in its satire these days, but it's that rare thing – a sequel that bests the original. **WS**



ROSEMARY'S BABY (1968)

Satanic panic

9 Part of Roman Polanski's apartment trilogy, his adaptation of Ira Levin's novel was his first and best American made movie. A frail Mia Farrow plays Rosemary Woodhouse, a young housewife whose husband makes a pact with the cultists living in their building at his wife's expense, in exchange for fame and money. Gender politics and pregnancy paranoia mixed with the horrors of urban living form the backbone of a Satanic nightmare that bagged an Oscar for Ruth Gordon. Wildly influential, adored by Kubrick, its "devil rape" dream sequence and Farrow's strange half smile in the closing moments still induce shudders. Levin approved, calling it the "most faithful adaptation of a novel ever." **PA**

THE DEVIL'S BACKBONE (2001)

Uncivil War

8 Guillermo del Toro has a knack for finding human evils in the midst of supernatural horror, and nowhere is that more evident than in this creepy Spanish ghost story. Because while moving into a 1930s orphanage plagued by "the one who sighs" might seem pretty terrifying, new boy Carlos (Fernando Tielve) soon discovers that fascism is far scarier. Aesthetically, *The Devil's Backbone* owes a debt to J-horror; its main ghoul has a similar look to the spectres who routinely seem to crawl out of wells and TVs in Japan. But while most of those films focus on revenge, there are more complex powers at play here. This is a sad story that's as much about war as it is about ghosts, told through the eyes of a child. **SD**

THE THING (1982)

Who goes there?

7 Landing two weeks after Spielberg's *E.T.*, John Carpenter's magnum opus gave viewers a decidedly less friendly visitor, as Kurt Russell and other bearded men populating a US research station in the Antarctic fight to the death with a terrifying shapeshifter. It was makeup maestro Rob Bottin who hit upon the idea of a fluid monster – original movie *The Thing From Another World* had a man in a suit – and DOP Dean Cundey who insisted they shoot it fully lit. The extraordinary SFX explode from a claustrophobic, suspense-fuelled masterpiece, but *The Thing* flopped. "I made a gruelling, dark film, and I don't think audiences wanted to see that," mused Carpenter, before adding: "I'm very proud of the movie." Quite right: its reputation grew on VHS, and it's now rightly regarded a masterpiece. **JG**



AUDITION (1999)

Murder and melodrama

6 Takashi Miike is incredibly prolific, with 100 directorial credits to his name – but *Audition* is undoubtedly his masterpiece. A reflection on gender politics in Japan, it's a surreal melodrama with a midpoint switch that turns it into brutal revenge horror. Based on a novel by Ryo Murakami, it stars Ryo Ishibashi as a widower whose son convinces him to hold auditions for a new girlfriend, pretending he's casting a movie. He meets Asami (Eihi Shiina) who is everything he dreamed off – for the first half at least. The closing scenes are notorious for a spot of enforced acupuncture to the syllables “Kiri-Kiri-Kiri”. It translates as “Deeper Deeper”, though the German phonetic translation “KilleKille” – meaning “tickle tickle” – nails the painful pleasure of *Audition*. **PA**



RINGU (1998)

Well, well, well...

5 At a time when US horror was caught in a laborious cycle of post-*Scream* post-modernism, director Hideo Nakata made a stripped-down ghost story that needed only distorted images, avant-garde sound design and a head of lank hair to burrow under viewers' skin. The plot is urban myth given tech edge: a cursed videotape is doing the rounds; watch it and you'll die seven days later. Hokey, sure, but try telling yourself that when ghost-girl Sadako (Rie Ino'o) crawls out of her well and then the TV to inch across the living room in spasmodic jerks with limbs bent in unnatural angles... (Ino'o actually walked backwards with exaggerated movements for these scenes, and the film was then run in reverse.) An instant-classic, *Ringu* kick-started a wave of J-horror and inevitable US remakes. **JG**

THE TEXAS CHAIN SAW MASSACRE (1974)

A glimpse into the heart of darkness

4 No, it's not a true story (though elements were “inspired” by the crimes of notorious killer Ed Gein), but that doesn't stop *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* from being one of the most blisteringly frightening and relentless films ever made. The story is almost comically straightforward: a group of youngsters are alone in the country (though they're there to visit a grave, rather than the usual party). They get stranded after a series of weird events (including a seriously alarming, self-harming hitchhiker) and, while looking for gas, enter a farmhouse... What follows is a series of graphically violent encounters with a deranged family, including breakout star Leatherface. There's little sense or rationale to the carnage that ensues – and that makes it all the more terrifying. **WS**

THE WICKER MAN (1973)

It's time to make your appointment...

3 A puritanical copper travels to a remote Scottish island to investigate the disappearance of a young girl and gets a lot more than he bargained for... We take *The Wicker Man* for granted, these days. It's cosy and funny more than it is frightening. The residents of Summerisle, with their sex and songs, are clearly having a much better time of it than Edward Woodward's scowling Sergeant Howie. But that's precisely why it works. It's about the power of religion and how it turns people into monsters. You see that in the islanders and their final crime (which we'll keep vague), but it's also clear in Howie, the film's nominal protagonist. He's a man who, because of his religion, has become an ultra-repressed puritan who can't see the horrible truth until it's far too late. **WS**



THE SHINING (1980)

All work and no play makes Jack an iconic antagonist

2 Frequently voted the scariest movie of all time, notoriously disliked by Stephen King, whose novel it's based on, Stanley Kubrick's supernatural hotel horror has fans still so obsessed that an entire documentary, *Room 237*, was made, exploring its dense subtexts and the rich mythology that has sprung up around it. The story of a psychic boy, his fragile mother and his writer father slowly driven psychotic by the ghosts of The Overlook hotel saw everything about the shoot – from the endless takes and bullying that drove Shelley Duvall to distraction, to Jack Nicholson's improvised “Here's Johnny!” – become the stuff of legend. Fortunately the film is too, packed with unforgettable imagery – the twins in the corridor, an elevator filled with blood, that trike ride through the hotel, the woman in Room 237... It lingers like we never left. **PA**



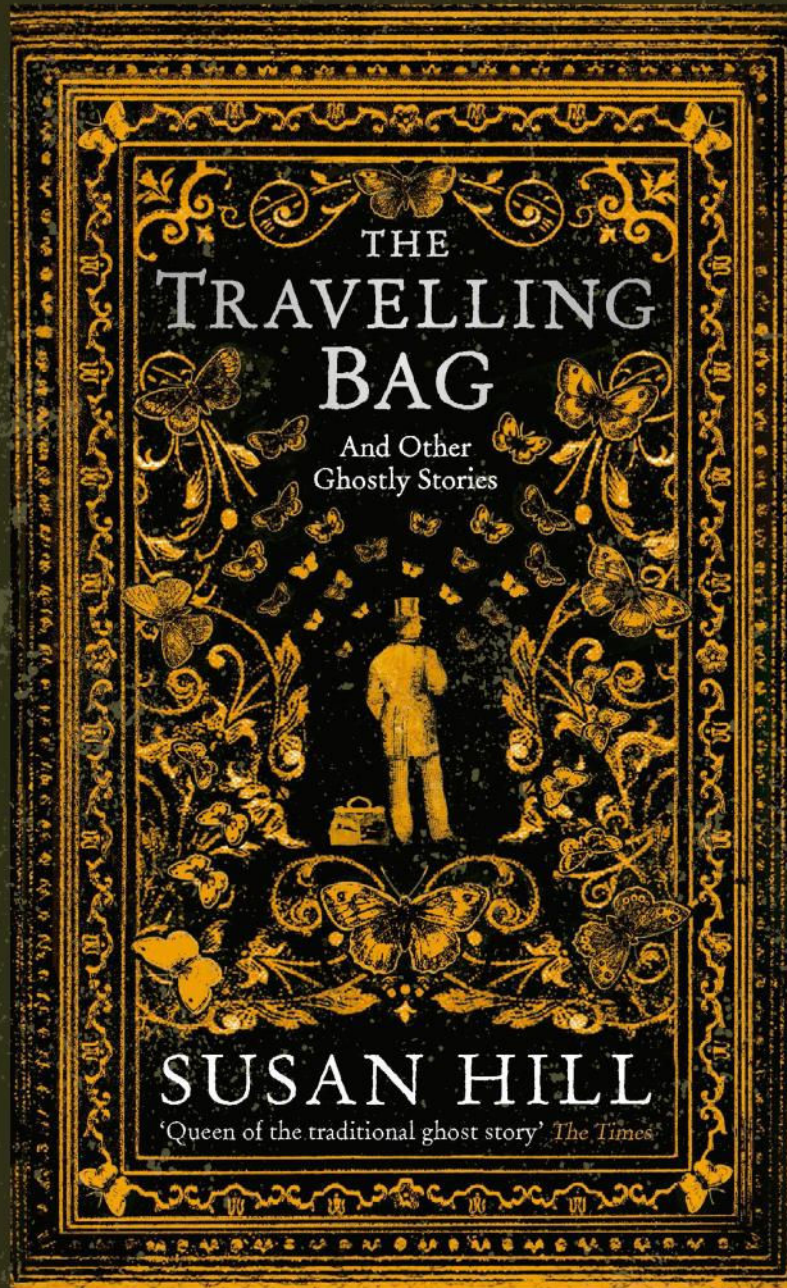
THE EXORCIST (1973)

The most frightening film ever made?

11 The shoot for *The Exorcist* was notoriously fraught, with director William Friedkin firing blank shots without warning to unnerve his cast, slapping real life rev Father William O'Malley (who plays Father Joseph Dyer) in the face before an important take and building possessed teenager Regan's (Linda Blair) bedroom set inside a freezer so her breath would be visible, but the results were electric. The first horror to be nominated for Best Picture at the Oscars (it got ten nominations and won two), based on William Peter Blatty's novel, itself inspired by a real case, the whole film is imbued with such menace that many viewers even now find it hard to stomach, as the troubled 12-year-old messes with a ouija board and invokes demon Pazuzu. A tale of Catholic guilt? A mother's paranoia over her daughter's burgeoning sexuality? Or a satantic tale of true possession? Whatever your take, *The Exorcist* remains one of the most powerful films ever made in any genre and it's to the film's credit that it can take all of these interpretations. A slew of wildly inferior sequels followed. Ignore them, and stick to the peerless, terrifying original. **PA**



HIGH SPIRITS



THE WOMAN IN BLACK AUTHOR **SUSAN HILL** TELLS
HORRORVILLE ABOUT HER NEW VOLUME OF
GHOSTLY "ENTERTAINMENTS"...



Ask a friend to name a famous modern ghost story and, chances are, they'll settle on *The Woman In Black*. Susan

Hill's 1983 novella about a spectre that heralds the death of children was already famous long before it was adapted into a stage play and, later, a 2012 movie with Daniel Radcliffe.

Since then, Hill has continued to write, alternating between crime – including the Simon Serrailier series – and ghost stories. This month sees the release of her latest anthology, *The Travelling Bag & Other Ghostly Stories* – a slim volume of four tales that explores the ghost story from different angles. High time, then, to catch up with the first lady of supernatural fiction...

Horrorville: Let's start with your latest book, *The Travelling Bag*. Could you tell me a little about how the collection came together?

Susan Hill: I didn't want to write another full-length one, and didn't have ideas to fit either, but I had an idea that I knew would work as a shorter story, and then it was a question of writing enough to make a volume, and I did the other three one after another.

HV: What keeps drawing you back to the ghost story?

SH: I love to take a traditional genre and do something slightly different with it, and I just loved writing these, as what Graham Greene called "entertainments" – as against novels. I don't take them very seriously but they're fun to write and a relaxation from literary fiction.

HV: It's a very varied set of stories. Do you think the ghost story is a more diverse form than people sometimes give it credit for?

SH: You can do anything with it, almost – so long as you have a ghost, even if heard or sensed but never seen. And it needn't be set in the past or in autumn/winter – one of my favourites, and a very fine story, is A.S. Byatt's *The July Ghost*, which is contemporary London and sad but not in the least frightening.

HV: The first story, "The Travelling Bag", is a tale of supernatural revenge in a historical setting. How did you



find writing in the story's more stylised tone?

SH: I always enjoy putting on a different voice. It's like an actor playing a different part, I guess.

HV: "Boy Number Twenty-One", on the other hand, is a melancholy tale. What was the spark of inspiration?

SH: A real incident in which a teacher went up the Tour Eiffel with 22 boys counted, and came down with 23... The explanation was that a boy had lost his own school party, so just attached himself to hers. I immediately loved what else it could mean. I don't often get ideas from real events but in this case it was too good to miss.

HV: "Alice Baker" evokes a spooky atmosphere from its ordinary office environment. Have you ever worked in an office like that?

SH: No, and I have no idea where it came from, none at all. I just started to write, which is usually the case. Sometimes I have a couple of vague notes but there weren't even those in this case. I just spun it like a spider's web... That's the way I mainly write and always have.

HV: Do you ever mine "true" hauntings for inspiration?

SH: Not really... "True" hauntings are rarely interesting because the ghosts don't usually have a purpose, which means there's no story... They drift up and down staircases or walk through

walls – "so what?" stuff. I like to look at photographs or read descriptions of places in which ghosts have appeared – they do start me wondering.

HV: *The Woman In Black* was hugely successful. Do you ever feel like you're competing with yourself when you come to write a new ghost story?

SH: Yes, every time. "Follow that!" I have to forget about it. I think I have by now. It's a long time since I wrote it. When I have finished a book, I send it out into the world to seek its fortune (no pun on *The Fortune Theatre* intended)... and that one has done very well for itself.


HV: Do you read much modern supernatural fiction?

SH: None – I read Sarah Waters's novels but because I admire her as a writer, not for their supernatural element, but it's best to avoid others. I don't want to get ideas, unconsciously.

HV: What, to your mind, is the scariest ghost story ever written?

SH: *The Turn Of The Screw*, I think. A masterpiece and so much more than a ghost story.

HV: What are you working on next?

SH: I have just finished a novella which is literary fiction – I hate that term but what else is there? – and I am starting the very last Simon Serrailier crime novel. I've had enough of being a crime writer. There won't be any more. 

"True hauntings aren't interesting because the ghosts don't have a purpose, so there's no story"

SPIRITUAL WARFARE

ONE OF CINEMA'S UNDISPUTED HORROR CLASSICS IS GETTING A DARING TELEVISION REBOOT, BRYAN CAIRNS REPORTS

Perhaps you've heard of *The Exorcist*? The 1973 film, based on William Peter Blatty's novel, featured the devil possessing 12-year-old Regan (Linda Blair). It ushered in a new era of horror and so far, no studio or network has dared to remake or reboot the terrifying tale... until now. Executive producer Jeremy Slater and Fox are reimagining the classic fright flick for this autumn's *The Exorcist* TV series.

"I first saw *The Exorcist* when I was 12 or 13 years old," recalls Slater. "It still stands out as the most traumatic movie-going experience of my life. I was not supposed to see it. I was living

in my parents' basement. I remember watching it on VHS at probably 2 am. It sounds totally unbelievable, but I watched it and went to bed and I started hearing something scratch at my bedroom window. It was an underground apartment and I had window wells. I would peek out and see nothing. I would go back to bed. My heart was hammering. This went on for an hour-and-a-half. By the end, I was terrified because every time I'd close my eyes, I would hear scratching at my window. Finally, I opened the window and came face-to-face with a possum that had fallen in the window well and was frantically attacking the glass.

"It felt like I had watched something transgressive and dangerous and almost

like horror had followed me home," Slater continues. "I was shaken for days after that experience. I still think *The Exorcist* is untouchable. There are very few perfect movies that exist and the number drops even more once you start talking about the horror genre. I really think *The Exorcist* is one of them."

BIG SHADOW

It's a tall order to follow in those kinds of footsteps. As Slater puts it, "*The Exorcist* casts a very long shadow." Nonetheless, Slater's fear that the property would fall into the wrong hands motivated him to modernise it for a new generation.

"My approach from the very beginning was, 'I'm not going to be the



guy who makes *The Exorcist* and neither should anyone else,” reports Slater. “A big part of the reason I initially took the job was to prevent another writer from coming in and doing a lazy reboot of the movie. That was very much discussed two or three years ago: ‘Let’s take a classic film and reboot it as a TV show.’

“My argument is when you are talking about films of this calibre, you’re never going to do it better,” Slater says. “You are only going to do it longer. I felt like *The Exorcist* was genuinely untouchable, so my approach was, ‘Let’s take the *Fargo* approach to this material. Let’s tell a story that takes place in the same universe as the original film.’ It’s not rebooting it. It’s

“*The Exorcist* was my most traumatic movie-going experience”

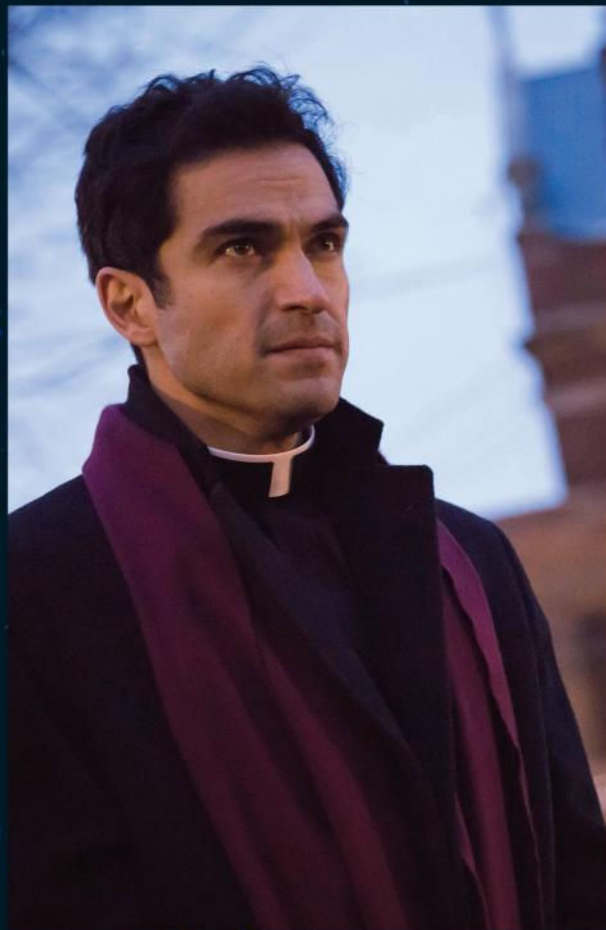
ABOVE
The Father gazes upon a house where evil dwells, in a shot reminiscent of the original.

not writing it out of history or saying it never happened. But it takes place in the same universe, has a similar tone and similar sensibility as the original film, without being indebted to it or trampling over everyone’s beloved memories of that franchise.”

Set to premiere on 23 September, the Rupert Wyatt-directed pilot picks up with Angela Rance (Geena Davis) – a wife and mother of two daughters –

paranoid that a malevolent presence has invaded her home and possessed one of her children. Angela, seeking guidance, turns to Father Tomas (Alfonso Herrera), a local priest who serves as the progressive face of the Catholic Church.

As Tomas investigates, he quickly discovers a darkness closing in on the Rance family. Along with Father Marcus (Ben Daniels) – a priest raised by the Vatican to vanquish demons – Tomas and Angela must confront their worst nightmares in order to save the soul of her daughter. Besides the gripping struggle of good versus evil, Slater plans to delve into some of the topics the novel and movie didn’t have the opportunity to flesh out.



“When you talk about the original *Exorcist*, obviously there’s the pea-soup vomiting”

“One of the questions we are exploring is ‘Why are certain people targeted and others are not? Why do some people wind up with a demon inside of them?’” Slater says. “Sometimes the person chosen is an innocent girl like in the original film. I don’t know why a force of evil would zero in on this one child, unless it was the fact it could strike at any time or happen to anyone. The second option, the one we’re leaning into in the show, is saying, ‘In our universe, evil has ambition. It has larger plans. It is targeting people for a reason.’ As the

show goes on, hopefully that plan will begin to come into focus. What may have felt very random and accidental at first glance, there’s actually a larger design behind those machinations.

“One of my goals going forward is to redefine what a possession means and what it feels like,” he adds. “The possession you see in the pilot – you are only capturing fragmented glimpses of something that’s already in progress. It’s an exorcism that has been taking place for 28 days. You are coming in at the tail end.

“Part of the goal is saying, ‘What

TOP LEFT
Angela Rance
(Geena Davis)
is the mother
whose child has
been possessed.

LEFT
Will regular
church visits do
any good?

ABOVE
Father Tomas
(Alfonso Herrera)
comes to the house
of horror.

does that possession look like on day two?’” Slater continues. “‘What does it look like on day 16? What is the progression like for the family involved, but also for the victim who is very much a prisoner inside their own body, watching as this malevolent force takes their body, their soul and uses it to do these incredibly hurtful, violent sacrilegious acts?’ It seems limiting until you get into the writing and realise this is uncharted territory for a lot of horror fans. Most possession stories take place fairly exclusively from the perspective of the parents of the victim or the people brought in to solve the problem. As TV creators we’ve been given the time to explore this world from different perspectives, including from the people getting possessed.”

The series might not follow the same playbook as the source material, but there are numerous nods and homages to it. The pilot opens with the iconic scene of a priest looking up at a window. The episode also concludes with *The Exorcist*’s original, creepy music score. In other words, there’s still plenty of nostalgia for the diehard fans to love.

“Any time you approach a cherished



“We are going to tell a very aggressive, very satisfying story”

property or franchise, there are certain touchstone moments that fans are going to be expecting,” states Slater. “When you talk about the original *Exorcist*, obviously there’s the pea soup vomiting. There’s Father Merrin stepping out of the cab on that foggy night. There’s the Georgetown steps, the head rotation and the spider walk. Those are some of the iconic moments associated with *The Exorcist*. We like to tip our hat a little bit in the pilot. There are a few more nods of the hat coming in later episodes.

“It’s important to me to include those because first and foremost, I’m a horror fan and have been my entire life,” Slater says. “These are things I’d want to see in a TV show called *The Exorcist*. I would want to know the

creators were approaching the series from a place of respect and love, that they were just as big fans of the material as I was.

“It’s also important to give these homages out in the open as easily as possible so that the audience can appreciate them and then move on and let the show step out from underneath the shadow of the book and the original film,” adds Slater. “We need to move quickly to prove to people that we are doing something very different here from the original film and that we are our own unique beast.”

NEW DIRECTION

Anyone tuning in won’t have to wait forever and ever for a resolution to this supernatural saga. Each season of *The*

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP RIGHT
Father Marcus (Ben Daniels) attempts to treat a young victim.

Father Tomas sees the light.

“The power of Christ compels you!”

Who to call first – an optician, a dentist or an exorcist...?

Exorcist is conceived as a single, unified story before relaunching in a different direction, with other characters, the following year. This allows the creative team to keep the show fresh and the audience engaged.

“I didn’t want to cheat people by dragging our feet and then having the demon jump to another body, or having the kid down the street now possessed,” Slater offers. “We are going to tell a very aggressive, very satisfying story in this first year and then figure out what the show is after that. The thing that is most exciting to me is how you turn something like *The Exorcist* –

“Creatively, we are approaching *The Exorcist* from a place of extreme love and reverence”

which is a very small and contained story – into a show that can conceivably run for seven or nine years.

“By the time audiences reach the last episode of season one, it’s going to be a very different show than they see in the pilot,” explains Slater. “That doesn’t mean we’re turning our backs on the story of this family or the tone or the horror. It means giving the audience hints starting in that first episode that evil has larger ambitions. The bad guys have a plan they are working towards. That plan is much more expansive and frightening than anything we’ve seen before in a possession story.”

Slater acknowledges there’s no pleasing everyone. Horror aficionados can be picky and protective of their genre. However, Slater believes their spin on *The Exorcist* will captivate old and new viewers.

“I would love if fans recognise that creatively, we are approaching *The Exorcist* from a place of extreme love and reverence, that no one is trying to reboot or remake the original film, or write it out of history,” says Slater. “Our goal is to tell a new, exciting story that will appeal to both fans of the original film and audience members coming to the franchise for the first time.”

“The pressure is really on our shoulders to deliver something that works for both parties,” Slater concludes. “If you make a show only the fans respond to, you are only satisfying half of the audience. I really feel a show like this has the potential to reach across the aisle and not only unite fans of horror, but also people who like to watch a damn good drama, with incredible actors, and that contains some big twists and turns.”

The Exorcist begins on 23 September on Fox in the US, with a UK airdate TBC.



The Exorcist TV series will go to deeper and different territory to the film.

Alfonso Herrera

What about *The Exorcist* script appealed to you?

The character. Father Tomas has many layers. The story is grounded with three-dimensional characters. Many things are happening, not just action, but inside them. There are these inner demons he has to fight and these doubts that he has. That applies to every single person on this planet. We have doubts. We have fears. We have demons inside of us. I really enjoyed playing that part.

Can you talk about how Father Tomas gets involved in the Rance case and what

his relationship with Angela is?

Angela comes to Tomas for help. The conflict is how Tomas sees the demonic presence. He views these sorts of things as inventions to explain mental illness. But Angela is very troubled. The plot sets up what is going to happen in the following episodes.

In what ways do Father Tomas and Marcus approach the case differently?

Father Marcus is a very experienced priest in the terms of exorcism. He’s travelled all over the world performing them. I look at him as this great white

shark fighting this evil presence. I see Father Tomas as this little sardine trying to figure out the basic things in his life, but he has great potential. That’s why they come together.

At the end of the pilot, Tomas gets a full dose of demonic possession. How intense was it filming that attic sequence?

It was very intense. We spent two days on that set. Basically, it was me, director Rupert Wyatt and the DP. It was two days of pure fun. There was a lot of teamwork involved. Rupert created this amazing atmosphere. There’s this very special energy and vibe to the pilot.

FIRST AMONG SEQUELS

THERE HAVE BEEN FOUR CINEMATIC SEQUELS TO THE EXORCIST. **MILES HAMER** WATCHED THEM SO YOU DIDN'T HAVE TO. BUT WHICH WAS THE "BEST"?



Exorcist II: The Heretic (1977)

DIRECTOR JOHN BOORMAN **STARRING** LINDA BLAIR, RICHARD BURTON, LOUISE FLETCHER

The Heretic may be the snappier subtitle, but for true Ronseal-like accuracy, *How to Follow Up One of the Best Films of All Time By Making Probably The Worst* might be considered more truthful. The baffling plot sees the return of Linda Blair's Regan, now inexplicably healing children with telepathy, as priest Richard Burton's Father Lamont investigates the previous film's (far more interesting) events.

By turns bewildering, ugly and criminally dull, Boorman's impenetrable scare-free trudge through unconvincing sets and seemingly endless metaphysical piffle stains the original by association and horror cinema in general. More concerned with the life cycle and migration habits of locusts than demonic possession, you'll find more heart-arresting thrills in a bowl of cold pea soup.



The Exorcist III (1990)

DIRECTOR WILLIAM PETER BLATTY **STARRING** GEORGE C SCOTT, ED FLANDERS, JASON MILLER

Okay, so it's an *Exorcist* sequel that the original neither deserves nor needs, but by Beelzebub's tail, this is easily the best of the sequels. Original author/screenwriter Blatty directs with an assured authenticity, adapting his own novel *Legion* into a refreshingly grounded riposte to the psychodrama of Boorman's disaster, wisely ignoring the events of that movie.

Exorcist III centre-stages the passionate but pragmatic Lt Kinderman, now played by George C Scott, investigating a bizarre series of murders with a satanic edge. Two parts police procedural to one creepily-realised slow-burn horror, Blatty's eye for character and unnerving imagery is kyboshed only by a rubbish studio-enforced exorcism climax. Even so, the rightly famous static shot corridor scene is utterly chilling.



Exorcist: The Beginning (2004)

DIRECTOR RENNY HARLIN **STARRING** STELLAN SKARSGÅRD, IZABELLA SCORUPCO, JAMES D'ARCY

The Beginning did for *The Exorcist* what *The Phantom Menace* had done for *Star Wars* just five years previously. It even has awful CGI.

Renny Harlin was given the unenviable task of reshooting Paul Schrader's already finished *Dominion*, as studio Morgan Creek had deemed it unreleasable. As the young Father Merrin, Skarsgård acquits himself well (especially considering he'd already finished filming pretty much the exact same movie), but this Egyptian-set cliché romp through some gory but deeply silly setpieces is a prettily-filmed, toothless chore.



Dominion: Prequel To The Exorcist (2005)

DIRECTOR PAUL SCHRADER **STARRING** STELLAN SKARSGÅRD, GABRIEL MANN

In all fairness to Morgan Creek, watching this cerebral but sedentary snooze-inducer, you can kind of understand why they fired the guy responsible and reached for the man behind *Die Hard 2*. A furrow-browed exercise in tedium, its universal critical standing fares marginally better than Harlin's effort, but don't let that fool you – this anaemic, gutless bore is still unworthy of being part of the same legacy as William Friedkin's peerless original. Execrable.

Of these four films, only *Exorcist III* still possesses a little of the original's black magic. Seek it out.

“Only *Exorcist III* still possesses a little of the original's black magic”

Body Shock

BASKIN has been one of the surprise treats of 2016. Louise Blain delves into the film's dark insanity with director Can Evrenol



There is nothing quite like *Baskin*. The nightmarish story of four Turkish cops on a routine call out descending into the depths of hell through an old mansion in the woods is an insane, blood-soaked sight to behold.

The movie started life as a 2013 short film from Turkish director Can Evrenol before making the leap to a full feature after Eli Roth took an interest in the production. While the deal with Roth eventually fell through, Evrenol still decided to make the movie, and the result is an experience unlike any other. Part *Goodfellas*, part *Hellraiser*, it's one of the most entertaining horror debuts we've seen in a long time. *Horrorville* spoke to Evrenol to find out more about his movie, his love of Cronenberg and filming in Turkey.

Horrorville: *Baskin* gets under the skin in terms of some really nasty body horror. Is that something that bothers you personally and that you wanted to explore in this movie?

Can Evrenol: Yes, I'm a big Cronenberg fan. I'm a big Freud and Kafka fan, so I think they underline many elements of the film – sometimes consciously, sometimes unconsciously. In real life, I'm a very easily

scared person. My wife, every now and then she jump-scares me at home, and I get so angry. And she makes fun of me, like "You're a horror director and you're so easily scared!" When I was a little kid, my friends and I would watch a movie, and there would be this particular scene that I was particularly scared about, and my friends were okay and I was traumatised. I used to cry, I couldn't sleep at night. I was scared of *Goonies*, I was scared of *RoboCop*! I was scared of some of the creatures in the Cantina in *Star Wars*! I think filmmaking is a kind of therapy for me, because I'm really focused on horror so much.

HV: How have people reacted to the film?

A friend of mine told me that she really enjoyed the film, and the way the horror element is kind of making fun of the cops and the Turkish element in the movie. Then, as the movie gets even more violent, it kind of makes fun of itself. It's over-the-top horror that's kind of criticising horror, and I like that. I like making my movie over-the-top and surreal and supernatural, so in a way you're kind of making fun of death and making fun of gore. The most primitive feeling is fear, and fear of death is what drives this whole genre. So in a way I think this is kind of my way of making fun and coping.

ABOVE
Some of the film's memorably grotesque effects

BELOW
Can Evrenol, the Istanbul-born director behind *Baskin*.



“The most primitive feeling is fear, and fear of death is what drives this whole genre”



HV: Turkey is not known for its horror industry. What was the film like for everyone to work on?

CE: It was the best time of my life! Every single day we had a mountain to climb – it was like a huge challenge. Every single day we were doing something that the crew had never experienced before. While that kind of prosthetic makeup is not unheard of, back home in our industry, they don't do stuff like that. They just see it in foreign movies, that's it. So it was really good to lure them into it.

Then the type of conversations the crew were having between themselves were interesting. The lead actor told me one day that he had a dream where there was a huge angry mob outside of his apartment. They wanted his head for insulting Turkish-ness in the movie. He was laughing at it as if it was a joke, but everybody had that little nervous thing – we were doing something beyond the boundaries for our culture. I always had a plan that maybe I could escape the country. It's never going to be that bad, but sometimes things are really illogical and terrible in Turkey, as in everywhere else.

HV: How was the shoot? Was there anything to do with all the blood and gore that the crew didn't like working on?

TOP

The horrors awaiting the police in the mansion are many, but its most disturbing are the unnamed butchers slicing up human flesh.

ABOVE

Known only as 'The Father', this is actor Mehmet Cerrahoglu who wears no prosthetics.

CE: My DOP didn't want to get into water! But no, the actors were all troopers. Even with all the prosthetics and stuff, nobody was really complaining.

The only thing that people were complaining about was the cold – it was *really* cold, and although my production team provided these heaters for everyone, it became like a game – everybody was trying to snatch the heaters. It was somewhere in between real indie filmmaking and professional, commercial type of filmmaking. We had some luxuries, but some things were really guerrilla.

HV: Your directorial style is really bold, especially when it comes to the gore sequences. Did you have specific influences on this film?

CE: In terms of the blood itself, we wanted to make it as realistic as possible and have as much of it as possible. At the end of the film it's really over-bloody, but I like it.

The colour palette of the movie – I wanted to bring in Argento. There's a bit of *I Saw The Devil* and *Only God Forgives* where it's not going overboard surreal, but it's very much focused and emphasised on the colours and toning them up a bit. 🍷

Baskin is available to stream online now.

WHAT'S HE BUILDING IN THERE?

A SINISTER OLD MAN IS COLLECTING MURDER ROOMS AND MAKING SOMETHING VERY NASTY INDEED... **WILL SALMON** INVESTIGATES THE MYSTERY OF *ABATTOIR*

Darren Lynn Bousman is an ambitious fella. The former *Saw*-franchise director has made four features over the last five years, ranging from the taut thrills of *Mother's Day* to the crazed musical *Alleluia! The Devil's Carnival*. But he's had another project ticking along quietly in the background all this time – a not-so-secret cross-media passion project that's finally hitting cinemas...

"*Abattoir* started out as a comic book maybe five years ago," says Bousman. "My original vision for the film was much bigger and the producers at the time said 'There's too much story to put on screen here. We're going to do a cross-media thing on the narrative,'" which I thought was really smart. So I started it as a comic book."

That comic, published in 2010 by Radical Studios, told the story of a real estate man, Richard, who faces the unenviable task of selling on a property after it has been the site of a brutal murder. He's quickly drawn into the web of Jebediah Crone – an old man with a disturbing interest in crime scenes.

The film of *Abattoir* riffs on that idea, but tells an entirely new story. Julia (Jessica Lowndes) discovers that her family has been murdered and sets out to investigate, with help from reporter Grady (*My Father Die's* Joe Anderson). It quickly becomes clear that somebody is buying up buildings that have been the scene of bloody

murders and is tearing out the rooms where the deeds have been done. But for what purpose?

A NEW KIND OF HAUNTED HOUSE

"I wanted to make a haunted house movie, but I didn't want to make a haunted house movie that you've seen before," says Bousman. "James Wan has cornered that market very successfully in the last couple of years. He did *Insidious*, which I thought was terrifying. I was like, 'Fuck, he did the coolest haunted house film.' And then he did *Insidious 2*, and I was like, 'Motherfucker did a cooler haunted house film.' So how do I compete with those?"

"There was another great film called *We Are Still Here*, which is a small film, but it's so well made. So I wanted to try and take a different approach to telling a haunted house movie. It's not about the ghosts themselves, but the actual construction of the house. It's a reverse haunted house movie."

"It's not about the ghosts themselves, but the construction of the house"

Bousman aimed for a noir-with-iPhones, *Brick*-style feel to the film.





Jessica Lowndes plays Julia, investigating the murder of her family.



In the years since the comic's publication, Bousman's conception of *Abattoir* has shifted. "The longer you take to go into production, the more people have ideas like 'What if we tried this? What if this happened?' Some of those made the film better, some of those made the film worse and some of them made the film go sideways. But the movie definitely changed during that time.

"Now a few things were for the better near the end. But it's a frustrating process because you're a day away from shooting, and then you have to wait six more months. And then you're a day away from shooting, and then you have to wait another year. So it was an arduous process."

The film was also beset by tragedy during its long road to completion. "This has been a production plagued with unfortunate events, including heart attacks and death," says Bousman, frankly. The film was very nearly made five years ago. Adrien Brody was attached to the picture and the crew headed off to New Orleans. "The first time we went there, we had a two-week hiatus and we lost our first AD. He had been with the project for almost a year. He flew home to see his family and tragically, he had a heart attack and died."

A few months later Bousman tried again, with a new cast in tow. But two days later one of the film's key investors also suffered a heart attack. "He survived, but that also shut us down for

another few months." The third time didn't prove to be the charm, either. After four days on that shoot production was again shut down.

OUT OF TIME

But here we are, with *Abattoir* finally complete. As originally planned, filming took place in New Orleans. "It was brilliant," says Jessica Lowndes. "It definitely added to what we were doing because we shot at this house that truly looked haunted. It's been there forever. It was an old plantation, and it's like... there's just this weird feeling. As soon as you step on that lawn, it's like, ugh. It got hit by Katrina and they didn't fix it. The ceiling is collapsing, and the wallpaper's peeling back, and we didn't even have to design the set – it was just there for us."

Perhaps the most interesting thing about *Abattoir*, however, is not its villain, but its curiously other-worldly tone. This is a film that, although it appears to be nominally set in the modern world, has a strong pulp noir aesthetic running through it. Characters use iPhones, but talk like they've stepped off the set of *The Big Sleep*. Heroes Julia and Grady wear '40s-inspired gear and the whole thing is, in some ways, more reminiscent of Rian Johnson's *Brick* than the *Saw* movies.

"You asked how the film has changed," Bousman says. "In the original draft, it was much more of a police procedural and *Se7en*-esque in the first two acts. My original pitch was 'I want to make *Se7en* for 60 minutes, and then I want to make *Hellraiser* for 30 minutes.' That was it. I wanted it to be set in a real world, make kind of a real environment, a hardboiled detective with a dame, and then at the very end, pull back the curtain and it's *Hellraiser*."

"I think much of that still exists in the movie, but at the time that we actually made the film, I was kind of in this film noir phase. I was watching a tonne of Humphrey Bogart films. I called [screenwriter] Chris Monfette and said, 'What if we make it: Humphrey Bogart and Lauren Bacall in a horror film today? What would that look like?'"

It's an intriguing choice that makes for a far weirder, and more unsettling tone. As the film opens you're uncertain when and where the film takes place. The first time you see the characters using mobile phones is weirdly destabilising. "*Brick* was a huge inspiration that I made everyone watch. When you're talking to an actor for the first time,

Bousman found the perfect derelict house to film in New Orleans.

Saw no more?

Long before *Abattoir*, of course, Bousman cut his fangs on three instalments of the *Saw* franchise. We wonder how it feels directing a standalone project like this, rather than a big franchise movie? "It's harder," he admits. "The thing with that franchise is, it was like going to an amusement park and riding the best rollercoaster first, and there's no line. You walk into the park and you walk right up to the rollercoaster and boom, you're on it, and there it is.

"Now, I got to ride that rollercoaster three times without getting off it. And then I get off the rollercoaster and suddenly people are there, and they're in line. Some of the best rollercoasters are closed. So I wait six hours in the line now for a rollercoaster that is not as fast or has as big a drop as the *Saw* films. It doesn't mean the rollercoaster's any less impressive. It's just not the same.

"Everything seems much harder now. But I think this is real life. This is the real world. I stepped into a dream when I made the *Saw* movies. Now I'm in the real world, and this is what you go through, making films. I feel like I learn with every new movie. Film school for me was the *Saw* movies, and I'm learning how to be a filmmaker now."



Jessica Lowndes

We talk to *Abattoir's* beleaguered hero, Julia...

How did you get involved with the film?

I got the script sent to me and I loved it. From the second I read it, I thought it was something very different. It's not your typical horror movie. It's definitely more of a psychological thriller and a beautiful tragedy, in a way. Darren said to me, before I read the script, "I want it to have this 1940s rapid-fire dialogue, like Bacall and Bogart." It's not like *Saw* or any of these other things where there's a lot of gore.

The dialogue is very unusual, isn't it?

I thought it was really challenging. There's a rhythm to it. As an actress, it's hard to say things you would never usually say. But it was also fun. I felt like everything just looked beautiful; the wardrobe and set, everything felt like a

play. And I think it gives you an eerie feel. From the very first scene, you're like, "Where are we? What's going on? What's happening?" He nailed it.

What was Dayton Callie like?

He's one of my favourite people on the planet! We had so much fun together. He's definitely very intense. But we're homies.

How about Lin Shaye? She's a bit of a horror legend...

I was so excited to meet her on the first day of filming, because she's been in everything. The scene where we meet – instead of just tapping me on the shoulder, she found a garden glove, and like flipped the garden glove and tapped me with it. She's so great.

What were the highlights from shooting?

I actually celebrated my birthday on set. There's a scene where I wake up with a burlap sack around my head. That was on my actual birthday, and I remember thinking, "This is so strange..."

you're like, 'It's film noir. But modern noir.' There's not a lot of movies that have done that. Rian Johnson's *Brick* is a great example of that. When I watched *Brick* for the first time, I loved how cool the characters were. I loved how cool Joseph Gordon-Levitt was. And that's what I wanted to do."

SEQUEL OPPORTUNITIES

As for the new cast, Bousman couldn't be happier. "Joe Anderson is great. He's a true actor in every sense of the word. He has to know the words, and he has to understand the meaning. He puts himself in that character. He got the script three days before we started filming. These are not easy lines. There's a cadence to the way they talk. So for

Yep, we're sure someone with a name like that is all sweetness and roses.



Lowndes describes the film as "more of a psychological thriller"...

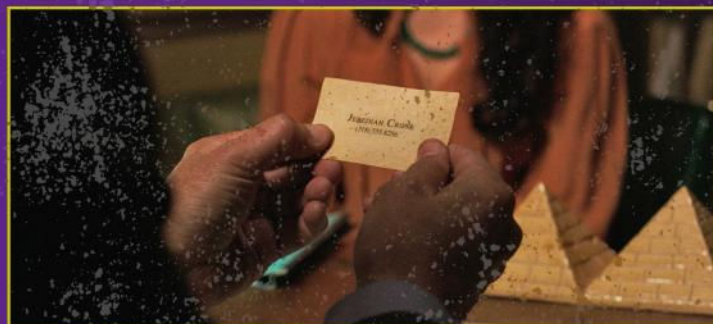
Joe to be able to walk in and immerse himself in this world and figure out how to say the words and sound correct was a fucking feat.

"Jessica, I've known for years. I needed someone for Julia that looked beautiful, yet could say those words and allow herself to go to an emotional state. She got it and that it was a risk. And she's the kind of girl that I could write a 10-page monologue and hand it to her five minutes before we film, and she'll be like, 'Alright, let me take a look at that.' And then she'll read it and come in and know every single word 100 per cent – which is a hard thing. We were rewriting a lot of the script on set."

There's another key cast member, of course: Dayton Callie, who plays the vital, villainous role as devilish Jebediah Crone, who is still taking a keen interest in murder rooms. "I love the Tall Man from *Phantasm*," says Bousman of Angus Scrimm's iconic bogeyman. "But I think, if I had to say one character that I based him on, it was the preacher of *Poltergeist II*. If you go back and look at him, he even looks similar. It's funny because Dayton Callie is a curmudgeon in real life, in a way that is awesome and bone-chilling at the same time. I love him. I've done two movies with him where he played normal guys. And I said, "We have to make you a villain. We wrote it for him."

Perhaps surprisingly, Crone is not as omnipresent as you might expect. "Jebediah's got maybe 12 minutes of screen time. The idea is that he's like Freddy Krueger, or like Pinhead in *Hellraiser*. These are guys that are touched upon, but they really spread their wings in the subsequent sequels. It's the same thing with Jigsaw. Jigsaw was only in the first *Saw* film as a body for a few minutes. And then we based a franchise around him."

Hang on, sequels? Isn't that a bit hasty? "The idea here is that, again, you see him in this, and then we really, *really* show him in a follow-up. And is that follow up in the offing? "Yeah, there's already a sequel written called *The Dwelling*, which is actually a prequel. We'll see what happens with that."



FEATURE

SIGNAL

10 YEARS IN DEVELOPMENT, THE MOVIE ADAPTATION OF
STEPHEN KING'S APOCALYPTIC *CELL* IS FINALLY HERE.
WILL SALMON SPOKE TO DIRECTOR **TOD WILLIAMS**...

TROUBLE

Samuel L. Jackson plays subway driver Tom McCourt, having a really bad day.



We live in an always-on world. Our phones wake us up in the morning. We read the news on our mobiles over breakfast and check Facebook and Twitter on them continually. Phones are with us all day, every day. But what if someone – or *something* – exploited that to bring about the end of civilisation?

No, we're not talking about the makers of *Pokémon Go*. Back in 2006, when Stephen King wrote his apocalyptic horror novel *Cell*, mobile phones were still a relatively new part of our daily lives. King exploited our fears of this new technology by having a "pulse" rewire the brains of the vast majority of humankind,



He is holding that bat by entirely the wrong end.

turning them into murderous, zombie-like "Phoners".

The book, while hardly vintage King, had a striking central premise that made it ripe for adaptation. A film was announced just two months after publication, with *Hostel*'s Eli Roth pegged to direct. A release date of 2009 was set, and then... nothing.

Cell finally arrived in cinemas this year, minus Roth but with *Paranormal Activity 2*'s Tod Williams at the helm. Starring John Cusack, Samuel L. Jackson and Isabelle Fuhrman, and with direct input from Stephen King himself, it's a broadly faithful take on the novel, albeit updated for our more connected world – a world, Williams told us when we spoke to him in June, that he doesn't feel quite comfortable in.

Horrorville: Let's start at the beginning – how did you come to direct *Cell*?

Tod Williams: It was sent to me



The world's ending? Head to the pub.

with John Cusack already attached, and that really attracted me. I'd never met him, but I was immediately taken with how smart and interesting he was and how much he appreciated Stephen King and this genre. He's a student of these films going back to George Romero, and he could talk interestingly about them. So it was really John, and the fact that some of my very favourite films are based on King's work, that drew me to it.

HV: Was there pressure to remain as faithful as possible to the novel?

TW: Stephen was involved and of course you always *want* Stephen to be involved, but I don't think the objective was ever to film a book for people who couldn't imagine a world when they read a book. When you're adapting a book this big you're going to leave 95% of it on the floor anyway, so you've gotta decide what is the 5%. Stephen wrote the book in 2006. The opening scene is set in a park and at the time it was about how phones are invading even the happiest and most pastoral moments, but by the time we made the film, the world had gone way beyond that...

There's a desire to continually refer to the book, to go back to the



book and to try and really identify the things that make it. There's a prominently featured ice cream truck in the book and we tried to bring it back in a different way at the end of our film. Ice cream trucks are kind of a King-ism. So we're finishing up the movie and then I see his new book has come out and there's a killer in an ice cream truck... So I feel like we identified the right object!

But in terms of trying to cover the material, you can do that if you do it in the long form, but if you're trying to be faithful you should start with a short story, not an 800-page novel.

HV: How involved was Stephen?

TW: He was part of the beginning and definitely part of the ending. He's a very busy person, but he made himself available to us as we started off and as we brought it home. And of course he's got approval over every element of it, because he's earned it and because you'd want him to have that.

HV: You've said that you see the film as being about the individual versus the collective. Can you elaborate on that a little?

TW: The movie is called *Cell*, but it's not necessarily about phones. The cellular aspect of that word could mean that you are a cell in

“More of life is becoming connected. I'm not sure that's what we're put on Earth for”

a larger body, I suppose. What I feel is that more and more parts of life, experience and existence are effectively becoming digitised. Film is, obviously, and I'm not sure... I certainly don't think it's all good. And yet there seems to be a belief that connectivity is automatically good. I'm not sure that's what we're put on Earth for. I think we're put on Earth to be alone, in a weird way. Alone together, you know what I mean? That's where life becomes rich.

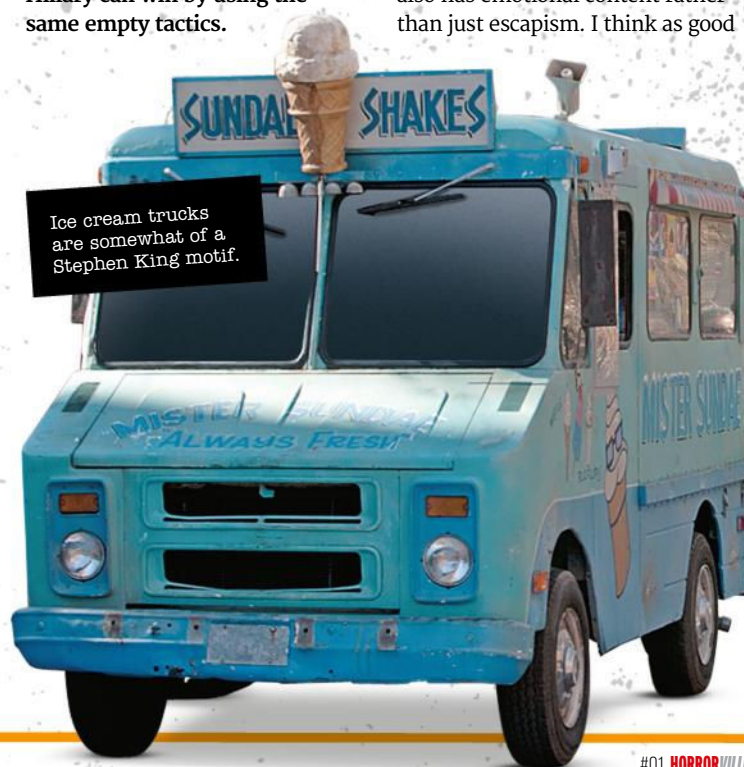
HV: Certainly things like social media are based on this assumption that connectivity is automatically a positive, but there are negatives too.

TW: I do think, in this country, whether you support Donald Trump or you don't, the entire conversation exists because people think in Twitter-think. He's an expression of the internet. He's effectively the raggedy man, he's the voice of the collective id as expressed in social media. And unfortunately, the opposition is

playing into that game by thinking in the same way.

HV: He's the master of that game and it's not a battle that Hillary can win by using the same empty tactics.

TW: Yeah. And as a father who recognises that the world will change, you can't go back in time, you've gotta make a choice... I think that that's what was so interesting to me about the book. I think that Stephen can be on the nose, and yet that's okay. Within that there's something worth thinking about. This reminded me of Romero and *Dawn Of The Dead*, in terms of that kind of awkward social commentary at times that also has emotional content rather than just escapism. I think as good



as they are, a lot of the later zombie films are about giving people permission to indulge in their murder fantasies. I think Romero's films are weirder and more uncomfortable now to watch – even the effects, which make a narrative point as opposed to trying to convince you you're watching something real.

So obviously I have a complex relationship with CGI in films. When does it become less interesting to try to recreate reality? You think about photography in the mid 19th century and what it did to painting, and I just think "Okay, if we're not going to shoot the world let's do something different..."

"In Atlanta you can't find extras who don't know how to do the zombie walk"

HV: Did you use a mixture of CG and practical effects?

TW: We did, and this sort of speaks to the heart of it. I would have loved to have made this thing really old-school, on film, but there's a million ways that you can't remove yourself from

the digitising process because of practical reasons. That's how it gets you, it gets you by invading and making itself indispensable. But yeah, obviously, there's a mix. And in some ways I think we're a very small film, but the way that we use CGI stuff is I think a little different in a certain way because we don't have the luxury of an

endless amount of time to create this flawless other universe. I think we kind of embraced that, and it speaks to what's happening to the world that Clay's living in. It is and it isn't convincing.

That's what I, as a filmmaker, find interesting. I fell in love with movies because of what you would record of the real world. It was like some magical thing where you would turn on a camera and you'd actually be engaging in the world and there'd always be accidents. When you're doing it the other way, you start creating

a closed loop that I find less and less interesting.

HV: You mentioned Romero there, and I wondered how much you'd looked to other zombie films for inspiration?

TW: We were aware of them. I mean we shot this film in Atlanta [home of *The Walking Dead* – Ed]. You can't point a camera anywhere in Atlanta or find extras who don't know how to do the zombie walk! So, if anything, we had to un-train them to make them be Phoners. We were trying to avoid that other stuff as much as we were trying to find the language of it.

HV: How was the shoot?

TW: It was very, very Romero in spirit, I would say. [Laughs] Meaning, y'know, we had a lot to do and not a lot of resources. We got through it in 24 days. We had a blizzard in the middle of our shoot. The airport – that whole opening sequence was shot in two days and that's a lot to do. So you just had to embrace [the fact] that perfection wasn't going to be part of what we were about. But again, for me, that speaks to the way Romero made films. I'm not sure I'm supposed to say how much

Tod Williams took on the film after being attracted to Cusack's involvement.

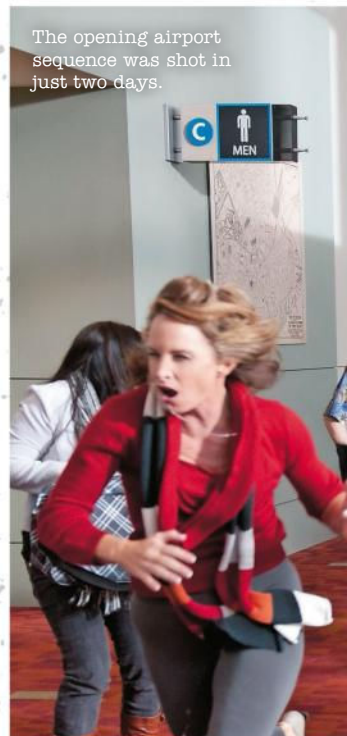
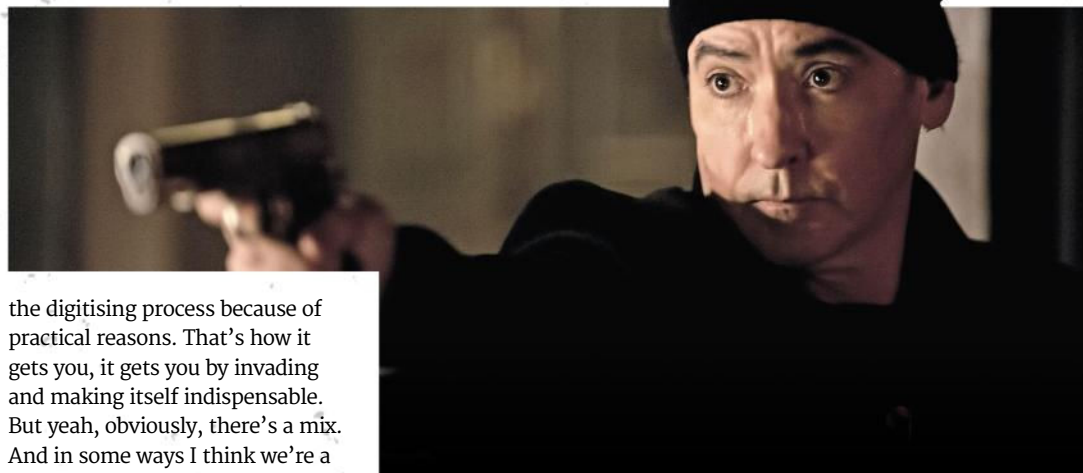
the budget was, but it was low. Loosooooow. To show the end of the world? It was low.

HV: It's a very impressive cast...

TW: John is an incredible firehose of creativity and ideas. He never stops thinking. So that was a lot of fun. And the other thing about John is [that] he's an incredibly warm-hearted person. With the young actors, Isabelle [Fuhrman] and Owen [Teague], John was really looking out for them. There's a real warmth in him, and he's an omnivore like me. He'll do *Love & Mercy*, which was fantastic, but he also loves horror.

The others came on much closer to production time. It was fun when Sam came on board, because, obviously, of the history those guys had in King world together. And then in terms of Isabelle Fuhrman, I felt like that was a last-minute stroke of genius. I thought of her as being still so young that she wasn't the first person I thought of, but when I realised she had grown up from *Orphan*, and I spoke to her, she was so warm and emotional. She really brings some lightness.

The thing about working with actors like Sam Jackson or John Cusack is how they are always, always good. It's kind of like



The opening airport sequence was shot in just two days.



"Sorry guys, they're all out of Cornettos."

driving an amazing supercar instead of some clunky shitbox, you know? You feel like "wherever I wanna go, we can go there, no problem." That doesn't mean that they'll just do whatever, but they can do what they want. They're fully in control of their talents.

HV: Which part of the film are you most excited about audiences getting to see?

TW: The ending is the part I'm most excited about. It challenges expectations. You create these larger-than-life situations, and eventually you have to bring them home in some way. You can do insane things but you have to land it somewhere. The film kind of goes into... you could say a dream state. Dream states can be kind of irritating but there's almost a descent into the subconscious at the end, which I think is going to be challenging for some people and hopefully some people will think that it's something they haven't quite seen before.

And in the beginning of the movie we're having fun with the more traditional aspects of what these films are, and then at some point the film begins to change into something quite different, as the Phoners themselves change. I think they're quite unexpected,

the way they move and where we find them.

HV: Obviously you have horror form, having directed *Paranormal Activity 2*. What are your favourite horror films?

TW: *The Shining*, for sure. And *The Dead Zone* – another Stephen King. I think, without a doubt, the scariest film ever made is *The Exorcist*. It's an amazing piece of work. It's not just the highlights of the movie that work, but the utterly unconventional narrative that Friedkin created. I wish there were more movies like that.

HV: Could you see yourself returning to the genre again?

TW: It's a funny thing, I never expected to end up doing it. *Paranormal* came to me a little bit out of left field and I just fell in love with the way that movie worked, with what it was saying about films and audiences. It was

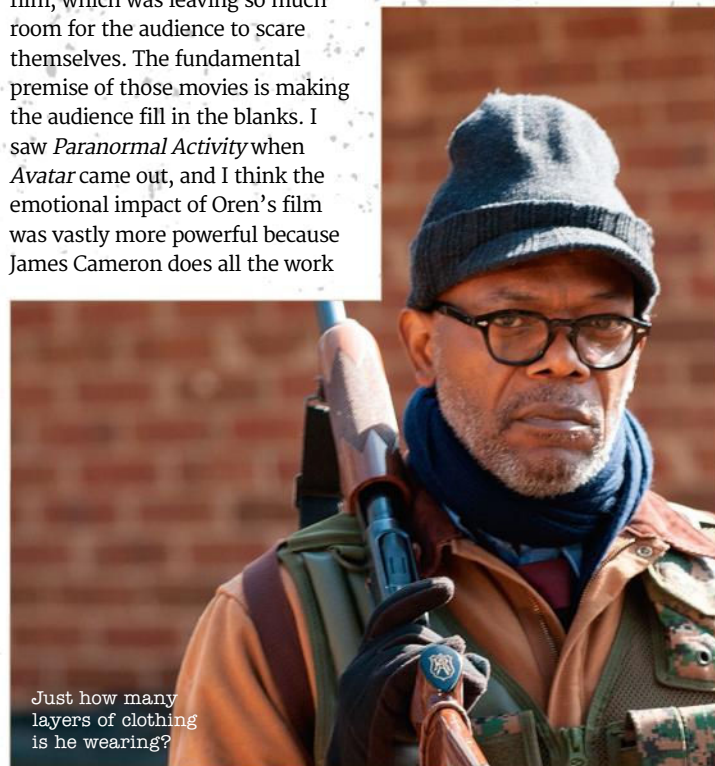
such a great experience. I feel like that movie, even though it was part of a larger franchise, was a very personal film. I'm definitely open to more horror but I'm kind of an omnivore. I like every kind of movie.

The reason I did *Paranormal 2* was because I was so excited by what Oren Peli did with the first film, which was leaving so much room for the audience to scare themselves. The fundamental premise of those movies is making the audience fill in the blanks. I saw *Paranormal Activity* when *Avatar* came out, and I think the emotional impact of Oren's film was vastly more powerful because James Cameron does all the work

for you on *Avatar*. There's also weird things that become positives – like boredom as a narrative tool, and it was a very conscious narrative tool. To me that's exciting filmmaking. Because we all know what the other thing is. Film can become very conservative very fast. Whenever someone does the wrong thing, I love it! 🍷



Isabelle Fuhrman is best known for 2009 horror *Orphan*.



Just how many layers of clothing is he wearing?

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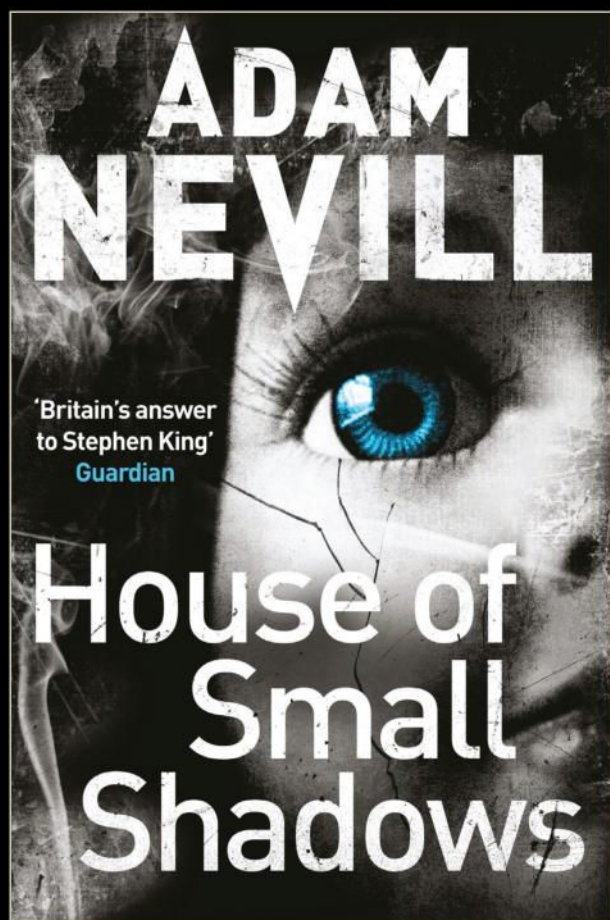
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DARK DREAMER

WILL SALMON DELVES INTO THE MIND OF BRIT AUTHOR ADAM NEVILL





ABOVE
House Of Small Shadows (2013) drew inspiration from Jacobean puppet traditions.

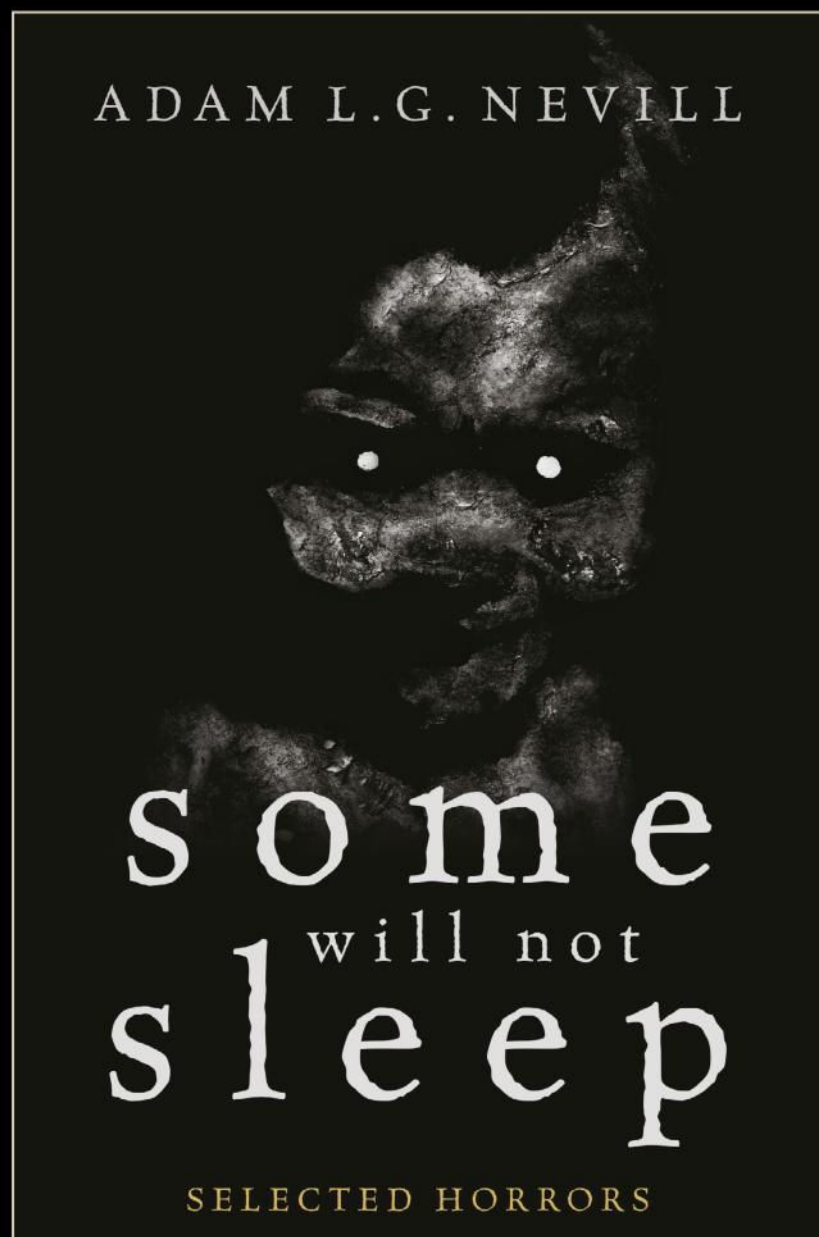
RIGHT
 Turn to page 112 to read our review of Nevill's latest, short story collection *Some Will Not Sleep*.

Over the course of seven novels (with an eighth due early next year), Adam Nevill has become perhaps the UK's foremost horror writer. His books are terrifying, beautifully written and extremely diverse, from the MR James-ian chills of *Banquet For The Damned* to last year's brutal revenge tale, *Lost Girl*, by way of doomsday cults, old gods and evil landlords.

With Nevill's first collection of short fiction about to be released, we caught up with the Devon-based author to find out more about the fears that keep him up at night...

HORRORVILLE: Did you always want to be a writer?

ADAM NEVILL: I was born a daydreamer. So powerful were my daydreams as a child they were like trances and were, at one time, a concern for my teachers and parents. Out of these daydreams, and through being read to as a child, writing was something I sensed I needed to do. The urge grew as I read independently. But it wasn't until my mid-teens that I



realised that doing anything else would probably leave me dissatisfied in life. And I was right. It was studying Joyce's *Portrait Of The Artist As A Young Man* at school that really set me on my current path. Its message seemed to be 'stop resisting and dedicate', so I did.

HV: And how about horror? What switched you onto the genre?

AN: On television, it was the *Doctor Who* serials "The Talons Of Weng-Chiang" and "The Seeds Of Doom" that really lit my fuse, augmented by the stories my Dad read to me and my brother, from the work of Sarban and MR James, Saki and Collier, to Lewis, Tolkien and Garner. From there I was drawn to horror and the fantastic more specifically.

HV: *Banquet For The Damned* was your debut horror novel, but you'd already been writing erotica for Virgin Books. Do you see any points of similarity between the two genres?

AN: Writing erotica taught me so much about craft and publishing. Getting it published was terrific for my morale as a fledgling writer. It kept me writing for years before anyone showed any interest in my horror. All but two of my erotica novels were probably horror novels too.

Both genres are dismissed by many as being pulpy and lacking in literary merit, because they are associated with stimulating base reactions. They're both outsider fields and are often protest genres too, and are terribly vulnerable to publishing and book trade trends. But they are inclusive and most often

populated by writers from ordinary backgrounds. They are not intimidating genres to begin writing in.

HV: I gather you did a lot of research into the occult for *Banquet*. Did you discover anything that you thought “that must go in a book someday”?

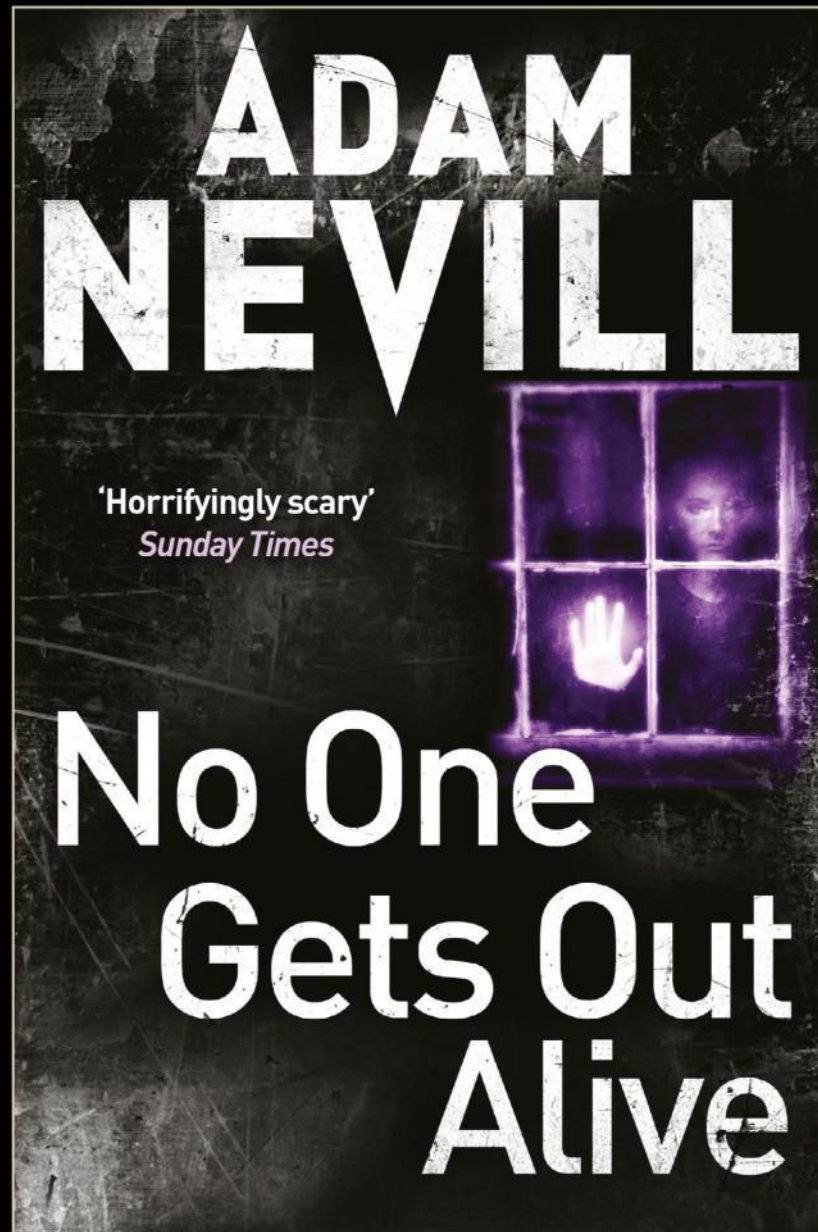
AN: One significant thing that I have learned through researching all of my books is that life, history, people and truth are far stranger and more fantastical than anything writers can devise in their imaginations. I am constantly uncovering real stories and facts that would be dismissed as unbelievable, or too weird, if they were found in fictional contexts. In that they would overwhelm a reader’s suspension of disbelief.

As far-fetched as the cult in *Last Days* may seem, my *Temple of the Last Days* was closely based upon actual cults in the 1500s and the 1960s. In *House Of Small Shadows* the vestiges of an oral puppet tradition I based the book upon did exist – the names of the puppets and characters probably originated in the Jacobean period. Every ghostly detail in *No One Gets Out Alive* is derived from recorded hauntings.

HV: It feels like there was a bit of a change in tone for your third horror novel, *The Ritual*. The book focusses on a group of men lost in a Swedish forest. The writing becomes much more visceral, less ethereal. Can you tell me how that book came about?

AN: It was my goal to mirror the modern horror film as much as I could with prose, in that the story began in crisis and the drama then escalated – an action film, if you like – and without recourse to the literary devices of flashback, exposition and narrative overviews from some omniscient author. It all had to happen in the now in tight focus as if the story was a film screened inside the reader’s imagination. I tried to rid the book of a narrator as much as possible, so that the point-of-view belonged to no more than two characters, but mainly only one. The language also had to mirror a stripped-down, exhausted consciousness in survival mode, subject to hallucinations. I wanted the distance between the reader and the story to be minimal. Close focus.

It’s a violent book in parts, but the violence had to matter and seem



LEFT

No One Gets Out Alive (2014) included themes of poverty and the housing crisis.

authentic without being unnecessary or gratuitous. It boils down to being a story about life and death. Minus the pagan god, people in this world are in that life and death situation all of the time.

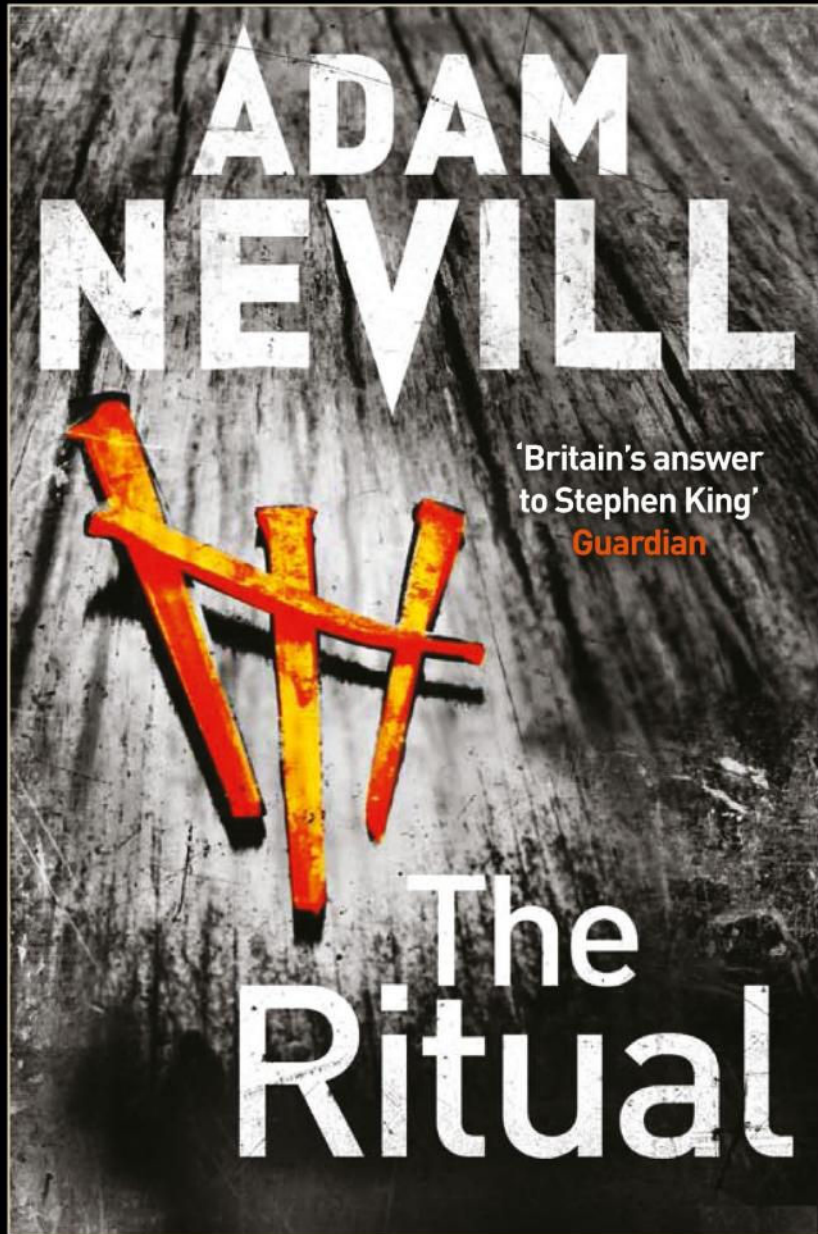
HV: There’s an element of folk horror in several of your books. What do you like about that subgenre?

AN: Folk horror is in all of my books, dating from 1997 when I first began *Banquet*. I’ve always drawn inspiration

from folklore, history and folk songs, because these things are so often grotesque, but full of vestiges of something ancient and enigmatic. The British Isles are so rich in material; we’re surrounded by it. I’ve been mining the resource for a very long time.

HV: How much do you draw on your own fears when writing and does that take its toll on you?

“Life, history, people and truth are far stranger than anything writers can devise”



LEFT
With *The Ritual* (2011), Nevill sought to mirror the feel of a modern horror film.

ideas that only become a story during the writing too. I dwell on bad things, study bad things, and I wallow in bad things imaginatively, in order to get them as plausible or authentic as possible – to make the ideas resonate and endure without a reader necessarily knowing why they are affected, or why they remember something. I like the imaginations of writers and readers to connect at a deep level. I’m constantly told my books “get under the skin”. I want to entertain readers for sure, but writing has to do more than that.

HV: Your most recent novel, *Lost Girl*, is a near future story with the horror coming from the fear of losing a child. Can you tell me a little about that book and what lead you to write it?

AN: Reading about the consequences of runaway climate change from a range of scientists, for years, whilst watching changes in the Earth happen sooner than was anticipated, was the impetus. I twinned this with my reading about collapsed civilisations and what caused the collapses, as well as my reading into what erodes civilisation, and our out-of-control population growth. It all combined over time and provided me with a picture of a near future world, in the 2050s, that is horribly possible if we continue along current trajectories.

My parental anxiety can be like a mental illness to me at times too. I have one child and am often tormented by thoughts of her being hurt, or worse. That had to come out too. It all came out in one book...

HV: Your books have been very diverse in plot and tone. Do you find that different genre styles requires different approaches to writing? Or do you switch between them easily?

AN: I let the story lead the style and structure and voice. I also never stop thinking about how a story should be written. There are so many options available to writers, but they are not all suitable to a particular story... *Last Days* could not have been written like *The Ritual*; two different stories on both scale and intent. I’ll never be a writer who writes every story in the same way in the same voice. If I ever do, I think I will have lost something; not least my curiosity about the possibilities within storytelling.

HV: How do you feel about the current horror scene? It feels like we’re

AN: Yes, I drill deep to uncover what disturbs, frightens, worries and enrages me, all of the time. Researching and writing *No One Gets Out Alive* followed by *Lost Girl*, over three years, without taking a breath, left me completely flat for a long time. It was the situations in those stories, and the minds of the worst kinds of people, that I needed to inhabit and understand to write the books, that culminated in an intervention from my wife, in which she worried I might be damaging myself. I think she had a point; I became terribly morbid and fixated by inhumanity.

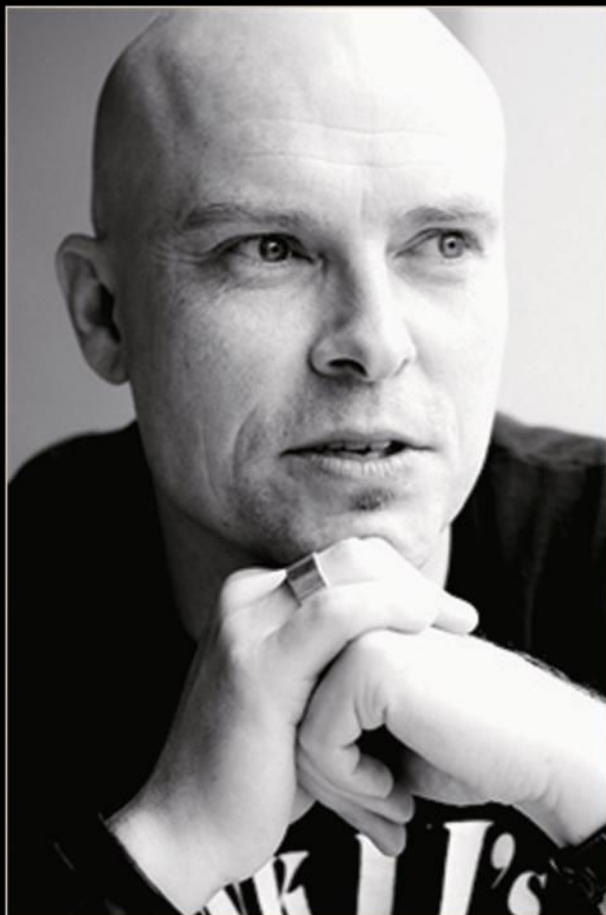
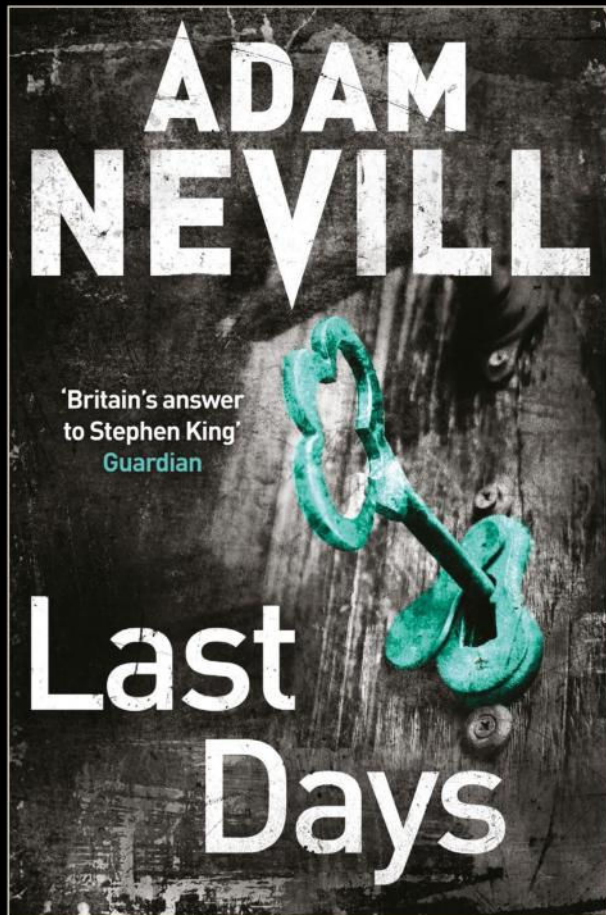
HV: There’s also a strong political element to your work. Does that come before you start plotting, as a statement that you want to make, or

do you weave it in as you’re writing?

AN: I’d say my inspirations or compulsions gradually take a shape that fits horror, more than anything else. I never think of myself as political, or rarely of making political points when I write, or of writing political novels. I’d hope the books go beyond politics and address inhumanity by effectively recreating unacceptable situations, circumstances and people that actually exist. I think the last two books have been warnings more than campaigns. I can’t stand polemic in fiction. I just read a lot, join dots and imagine the potential consequences of certain situations, near future states, and our exposure to certain personality types.

Deciding to write a particular novel arises from a variety of images and

OPPOSITE
Last Days (2012) follows a documentary maker investigating a dangerous cult.



starting to see some really interesting talents blossoming again after a few years where the genre was being largely ignored in the UK.

AN: I feel good about the culture of horror. Putting traditional publishing to one side, at a creative level, horror is burgeoning because many new writers are compelled to write horror, and are not chasing trends. They have mostly produced work within the underground where they have enjoyed unlimited creative freedom, and many have read widely too and they mingle styles, and approaches to the field, beyond conventional story structures and expectations. A great new short story writer seems to pop up every month.

Horror is more inclusive now too, less formulaic, and has been freed of too much commercial arbitration by the big houses, through the speed and range of the internet. The 'net has allowed readers and groups of writers

formats. Traditional publishing is virtually closed to short stories and I wanted to publish this in my own way.

When reviewing the stories for *Some Will Not Sleep*, I realised how closely they pay homage to my roots and influences, and how most of them also create an actual monster, or monstrous form, within the story. They all focus on disturbing or frightening the reader too. That primary element in horror I've never abandoned or obscured much at all. There's a line in horror from MR James to the present age and I have always walked it. Some may call that conservative, but I find it's my strength and what my readers enjoy.

HV: How do you find writing short stories, compared to writing novels?

AN: Well, besides the obvious constraints on length, many of my stories have been written within the themes or concepts of the anthologies

"I want to entertain readers for sure, but writing has to do more than that"

to form self-sustaining niches that bypass the traditional routes. Most literary horror is happening off mainstream radar.


Within the public consciousness it is supported by quality television and a really healthy indie film scene too. *True Detective* was directly inspired by indie horror and near forgotten classics of cosmic horror. I think we've enjoyed a revival, dare I say a renaissance, for at least eight years and counting.

HV: Can you tell us about your new short story collection, *Some Will Not Sleep: Selected Horrors*?

AN: It's my first collection of short horror stories. I've written enough stories since the mid-nineties to fill three collections, but have decided to publish two volumes of selected stories and *Some Will Not Sleep* is the first book. The stories in this volume were written from as early as 1995 until as late as 2011. I'm publishing these collections through my own imprint, Ritual Limited, in a variety of

themselves, so the stories weren't written speculatively. I think this has been good for me as it has made me stretch my imagination into new areas and produced stories that I wouldn't have otherwise written.

HV: Finally, what can you tell us about your next book?

AN: Well, there are four books coming at you from me in the next seven months. *Some Will Not Sleep: Selected Horrors* will be published in September 2016. *Under A Watchful Eye*, is due in January 2017 (it's a new novel of psychic terror, literary rivalry, blackmail and astral projection) from Pan Macmillan. And I am publishing two free eBooks through Ritual Limited. If you register at my site, you'll get a full length free book, *Cries From The Crypt*, which is a selection of fiction and non-fiction writings on horror. A second free book of fiction, *Before You Sleep*, is due in August at all major online retailers too. 

www.adamlgnevill.com

MY FAVOURITE HORROR
PETER STRICKLAND

THE DIRECTOR OF *BERBERIAN SOUND*
STUDIO TELLS **WILL SALMON** HOW
HORROR HAS SHAPED HIS WORK

Peter Strickland has made three films in eight years, beginning with 2009's *Katalin Varga*, a superb thriller set in the Carpathian mountains. It was a bold, unique debut, entirely self-financed well received if, sadly, not widely seen.

The two films that followed, however, were something else entirely. 2012's *Berberian Sound Studio*, set in a claustrophobic Italian film studio in the '70s, is the tale of Gilderoy, an English foley artist (played with vulnerability and moments of explosive rage by Toby Jones) losing his grip as he works on a blood-drenched giallo picture that's way beyond what he signed up for. It's a fascinating film that uses all the tools of horror cinema, without shedding a drop of blood. Instead, it relies on claustrophobic sets, the terrifying possibilities of sound, and brilliant performances to convey Gilderoy's disintegrating sanity.

Two years later *The Duke Of Burgundy* (2014) did something similar for the erotic thriller by portraying an S&M lesbian romance, but skipping past any explicit sex. It's an eerie film, hard to pin down to a specific time, place or genre, but again influenced by the likes of Mario Bava and Jess Franco.

These films clearly owe a debt to horror cinema while not containing even a trace of pastiche. Strickland is one of our most interesting directors and he kindly agreed to tell us how the genre has impacted on him.

Horrorville: We're a horror magazine and your work is in an interesting position in that you haven't made a straight horror film, but there's a clear affinity to the genre. How much has horror influenced you?

Peter Strickland: Horror has definitely been an influence, but no more or less than other types of film. The advantage of horror is that it permits a more wayward approach to storytelling and mood. Some of my favourite horror moments have nothing to do with violence. The



deranged feral cacophony in *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* is one example, or Isabelle Adjani's subway freak-out in Zulawski's *Possession*. Even though those two films couldn't be more different, there's this ferocious primal power to both of them, but the deaths are only one facet of that. The relentless sonic menace applied by Tobe Hooper and Wayne Bell in *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre* is something that gives so much to the viewer. The mood and atmosphere of a horror film are what I'm looking for more than plot or violence.

"Most of my horror memories are of the lurid VHS sleeves in video stores rather than actual films"

HV: Can you remember what first switched you on to the genre?

PS: I'd been aware of horror from an early age. Kids would always talk at school about some video nasty they'd got hold of. Most of my horror memories come from the lurid VHS sleeves in video stores rather than actual films. So in a way it was probably the likes of Graham Humphreys and other poster and video sleeve designers that switched me on to the genre more than any specific films. I didn't get into Italian horror until the early '90s, but what really cemented that was a two-

month Mario Bava season at the National Film Theatre in 1998.

HC: Our readers will probably know you best for *Berberian Sound Studio*. What was your starting point for that?

PS: The film had a number of starting points, which eventually intersected. I had already made a short film about foley artists but it was more of a joke. It was only later when I thought about the other aspects of audio post-production - dubbing, music and so on - that I thought there's enough material for a film. The voice composition "Visage"

HAZARDS OF DUKE

The Duke of Burgundy is a warm, funny and occasionally quite disturbing film.

by Cathy Berberian and Luciano Berio was a huge influence. It's an avant-garde piece of music, but you could imagine that going perfectly for a horror film. The film was exploring the idea of sounds and their contexts. A cabbage being sliced open in a kitchen versus a cabbage being sliced open for a horror film - the sound doesn't change, but the different context means everything. The association of sounds, the corruption of sounds and how that messes with your head.

HV: Do you consider it a horror film?

PS: It's certainly about horror and



aspect to sound manipulation. The transformation of an everyday sound either through effects units or simply altering a context into something other is a kind of alchemy. But it's not just the sounds, it's also the look of those sound processes such as looping tape around a room, something which is lost in the digital world. The loop is a very strong visual motif that is even reflected in many of the designs for tape boxes. I remember working with [graphic designer] Julian House on the tape box designs and he suggested how close a lot of these spirographs are to sigils. You can see how various sound manipulators left on their own too long turned to the occult, the best example being Joe Meek.

HV: At one point you were in talks to remake Jess Franco's *Lorna The Exorcist*. How far did it get before you moved on to *The Duke Of Burgundy*?

PS: I didn't get very far at all. It was just an idea that fizzled out, but the impetus to attempt a Franco remake led to some of the tropes in *The Duke of Burgundy* – female lovers, sadomasochism and that wonderful Euro decadence in terms of locations and atmosphere. What we ended up doing was very different from Franco. Still, his films were a starting point in terms of exploring the domestic realities of a sadomasochistic relationship, albeit in a preposterous setting.

HV: You recently directed a radio adaptation of Nigel Kneale's *The Stone*

embodies the spirit of it to some degree, but it fails to deliver a death count. Because of that, it feels fraudulent to call it horror but it also feels pretentious to deny it's horror. I'd rather be bland and call it a drama about work.

HV: There's an obvious love of giallo there. Which films were particular reference points when you were working on it?

PS: For "The Equestrian Vortex" [the film within a film which we hear being made, but only ever see the title sequence of – Ed], I was trying to go for the Gothic horror of Dario Argento's *Suspiria* and Bava's *Black Sunday*, which were explicit influences. For *Berberian* itself, there were not so many film references. Perhaps the biggest two influences were Peter Tscherkassky's *Outer Space* and Juraj Herz's *The Cremator*. I was and am a fan of Italian horror and giallo but didn't feel there needed to be much of a visual connection between *Berberian* and those films bar a few obvious references.

Of course, I love Dario Argento, Lucio Fulci, Mario Bava, Sergio Martino, Umberto Lenzi and many others, but the biggest influence in terms of the look of the film was the Studio di Fonologia in Milan, which was run by the avant-garde composers Luciano Berio, Luigi Nono, Marino Zuccheri and Bruno Maderna, who also did the soundtrack to Giulio Questi's *Death Laid An Egg*, which for me was a perfect

poultry reference since the emblem for Gilderoy's hometown of Dorking is a chicken that hails from Milan. What I still love about the Italian horrors is that sense of mystery. Those films seemed so otherworldly and ethereal. The soundtracks definitely enhanced that sense of otherness and beauty.

HV: Obviously sound design is central to that film, and there is this oddly occult vibe to outfits like the BBC Radiophonic Workshop. What's the connection, do you think, between sonic manipulation and magic?

PS: There is an inherent ritualistic

AWARDED

Berberian Sound Studio won four gongs at the British Independent Film Awards in 2012, including best actor (Toby Jones) and best director (Strickland).

STYLISTED

The lush costume-drama world of the Duke of Burgundy changes as the relationship between Evelyn and Cynthia turns dark...





Tape. When did you first see the original, and what stayed with you?

PS: I discovered *The Stone Tape* very late, maybe around ten years ago. I was fascinated by the idea of this technological struggle to harness something unknown and beyond comprehension. That dichotomy between a rational aim and something primal definitely stayed with me.

HV: Was it always intended for radio?

PS: It was going to be for TV. Matthew Graham wrote his own version in 2012 and asked me to direct. I was confident we'd get it made, but I was wrong and eventually we abandoned it. I wrote and directed a radio play a few years later and there was the opportunity to do another one and *The Stone Tape* came up. Matthew was keen and we both agreed it was actually better to adapt for radio, especially if we restricted the residual haunting to only sound.

The medium of radio seemed like a natural ephemeral home for the cries

of the deceased. We saw this adaptation as a chance to explore natural acoustics in relation to the human voice. There's the haunting element, but also ideas about the recording medium and our perception of sonic space. It was a dream project for me as we could embed various sonic practices into the narrative without it feeling gratuitous. Alvin Lucier's *I Am Sitting In A Room* album was as much of an influence as Nigel Kneale.

HV: How much of an influence has Nigel Kneale and that strain of strange, spooky '70s British TV had on your work?

PS: Not enough. I got into Kneale very late and there's still plenty to discover beyond his more famous works.

"I love the grace and precision of John Carpenter's Halloween"

SUFFERING FOR YOUR ART

We never see the horror film on which Toby Jones's sound engineer is working in Berberian Sound Studio, but it becomes chillingly more real to him.

Similarly, I had only seen a handful of the spookier television plays until the BFI box set of ghost stories introduced me to several new works.

HV: Which films have scared you?

PS: I have a soft spot for films like *Basket Case*, mainly because of the grimy 42nd Street atmosphere. I love both the grimy New York films and also the operatic Italian fare. But there's no shortage of brilliant mainstream horror. I love the grace and precision of a film such as John Carpenter's original *Halloween*, which doesn't suffer at all from seemingly high production values.

I find *The Omen* pretty scary. Maybe that's because I saw it at a young age. I thought Billie Whitelaw was devastating in it. She managed to exude such tremendous malevolence with only a small part. She's someone I would've loved to have worked with.

There's a huge amount I'm still yet to discover as highlighted by books such as Stephen Thrower's *Nightmare USA* and Jimmy McDonough's Andy Milligan book *The Ghastly One*, along with fanzines such as *Sleazoid Express* and *Gutter Trash*. That whole twilight world of the Deuce/42nd Street described in those books and fanzines is fascinating. The mob were often funding the films, so it was a genuine shadow industry and the act of going to those grindhouse cinemas was often risky. Often, the goings-on in the cinemas were more horrific than what was on screen. I've only seen a handful of grindhouse films, which vary wildly, but some of the sub-genres such as the "roughies" are best left under a stone.

Cronenberg is probably my favourite horror director. I wouldn't say his films scare me, but the ideas they introduce transcend the genre. **IV**



DUKE IT OUT

The title of *The Duke of Burgundy* refers to a species of butterfly, and indeed butterflies are a motif throughout.

THE SOUND OF FEAR

FABIO FRIZZI, THE MUSICAL MASTERMIND BEHIND LUCIO FULCI'S ITALIAN CLASSICS, IS PLAYING LIVE IN LONDON THIS OCTOBER. **SIMON HOOPER** SPOKE TO HIM ABOUT HIS CAREER AND HIS MUSIC

As John Williams is to Spielberg and as Bernard Herrmann was to Hitchcock, so composer Fabio Frizzi was to legendary Italian horror film director Lucio Fulci.

And like Williams' pulsating drumbeat in *Jaws* and Herrmann's shrieking violins in *Psycho*, so Frizzi's mellotron was a vital component of his distinctive soundtracks, making them instantly recognisable.



ABOVE

The maestro of menace! Fabio Frizzi composed some of the greatest horror music ever.

BELOW

Dead men walking: a famous scene from *Zombi 2* (aka *Zombie Flesh Eaters*).



As a child Frizzi had been a keen swimmer, but this was curtailed by asthma. His father, who worked in the film industry, wanted him to continue his studies in law, but by then his interest in music was well established: he played classical guitar, and weekends were dedicated to his love of music. By the time he was 23 years old, he had formed a band with fellow musicians Franco Bixio and Vince Tempera, and as a trio they moved into composing film soundtracks. Their first film was a low-budget 1968 Western, *And Now... Make Your Peace With God*. Not the greatest of films, but a huge step for the young musician.

"You have to remember that my father was already working in the cinema field, so it was easier for me than it would be for other people," recalls the composer, speaking from his beautiful house in Rome. "I knew Italian actors, I would go to premieres and screenings, so it was easier, yes, but I was passionate. I studied, because after all it takes a while to get good at making music!"

It would be another seven years before he first worked with Fulci, but this too was on a western, *Four Of The Apocalypse*, starring the actress and model Lynne Frederick. The film's violence gave a hint of what was to come from Fulci... But the director's next film was the odd 1975 comedy *Dracula In The Provinces*, which also featured a soundtrack by Frizzi, Bixio and Tempera. Their last film as a trio was the thriller *The Psychic*, which was also one of the last films Fulci would make before he plunged headlong into full-on, censor-baiting horror with *Zombie Flesh Eaters*, or *Zombi 2* as it was later marketed.

Zombie Flesh Eaters was Frizzi's first solo soundtrack for the producer without the safety net of his two composer partners, although Giorgio Tucci also contributed, along with two other uncredited composers. It was notorious for its literally eye-popping effects, which got it heavily

censored in the UK, and it set the template for Fulci, now a fiercely demanding director, although the film's lead Ian McCulloch said: "Fulci was a consummate professional. He knew his job backwards. He knew exactly what he wanted, what he wanted to shoot, how he would shoot it – and as you probably know Italian crews don't waste any time and don't like wasting any time. They like getting exactly what they need for the story and they do it very, very quickly. So everything was more or less pre-planned. Unless there were accidents or whatever, they would stick to it."

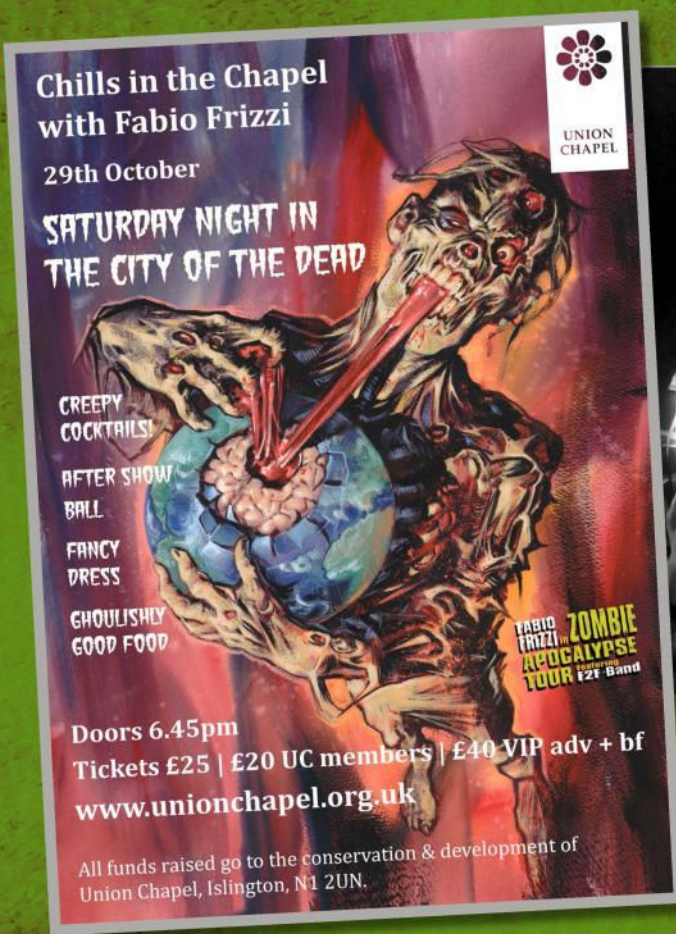
For Frizzi it was the beginning of a successful partnership in a genre that would cement both his and Fulci's reputations in films with distinctive and influential soundtracks. Silver-haired, gregarious and always laughing, Frizzi spoke to *Horrorville* about working with Fulci and touring with his musicians in the Frizzi2Fulci tour.

Horrorville: Do you think you would still have gone into film if you hadn't developed asthma as a child?

Fabio Frizzi: That's a very clever question! I've never been asked that before. But music and cinema were in my life even then, because my father was in the cinema industry, all my family loved music and opera, and in school I was in the choir, so music was in my life. But it's like the film *Sliding Doors* – it was the opportunity to begin something that is now my life!

HV: Was your father keen for you to follow him into the film industry?

FF: My father didn't want me to be a musician because for me and my brother he wanted something that was more stable, you know, like a producer. He wanted me to be a lawyer, and I studied because I respected my dad and I wanted to do something for him but also something for



ABOVE

The very cool flyer for Frizzi's upcoming Chills In The Chapel show in London.

ABOVE RIGHT

Frizzi at play. The show will be essential for fans of horror music.

myself. I loved what I was studying but music was... [a greater love]. He didn't like it in the beginning but when he saw that I loved it and I could do it quite well, he was very happy.

HV: How did Carlo Bixio offer you your first solo music composing job on the film *Amore Libero*?

FF: I tried to figure out who could help me in this way, and at that time Carlo was a publisher with a lot of people working for him. He understood me and he asked me about my experience studying with my beloved maestro Taborra. He knew I wanted to write, so he gave me everything he could and put me in touch with his brother Franco Bixio, too, as he knew what to do.

HV: You've said you were influenced by the Californian West Coast sound but also the mellotron. Where did you first hear it and why do you use it so much?

FF: The problem is always the budget, so instruments like the mellotron give you the chance to feature an orchestra. The first time I heard it and really liked it was The Beatles, and it was like a fever. I was 13 or 14, playing in my first band after I gave up swimming. I remember it in "Strawberry Fields Forever" with flutes and I thought, "Why not try this incredible machine?"

I liked Claudio Simonetti and people like that who love the English way of doing pop/rock.

HV: You started working with Fulci on *Four Of The Apocalypse* but then he

moved into making some extremely violent horror films. Did you ever think, "I'm not doing this film"?

FF: In the first film we did together, *Zombi 2*, but also when I did *Four Of The Apocalypse*, I was a baby. Some of it I think is a little strong, but in the cutting room on the Moviola you see how the shot works, and with movie after movie with Fulci and the editor it was quite a joke to see where the puppet was... But the first time was quite bad.

HV: Fulci was renowned for being extremely demanding. How bad did it get?

FF: Lucio knew exactly what he wanted. He had a clear idea, and he knew we wanted to be good. He used to be bad with some but never with me. He would tell you what he wanted, and step by step we would get there. The relationship between director and musician is never easy because you must not just be a musician, you must be a movie musician – that is, an actor, a character in the movie. So I had to learn to be that way, and in a way he was a teacher. He was very rough sometimes but after many movies I knew I had to work hard on the movie, not just the music. [For example,] when I was mixing *City Of The Living Dead*, I'd written a theme that I loved so much – sentimental, with flute and strings – and I put this on the titles. The engineer starts mixing the start of the movie, and Lucio says, "What is that? Aarrggghh!" and he says the movie has to go back to the Moviola to change the music. At first I could have died. He was not going to put it anywhere in the movie. It's on the LP, but not in the movie. I can tell you this is a little revenge for me but now I play it and I say, "Sorry, Lucio, this is for me!" It's a bit of fun for me.

HV: You didn't work on *The Black Cat* for Fulci. Why was that?

"You must not just be a musician but an actor, a character in the movie"



HV: Were there any projects you were going to work on before Lucio died?

FF: I think in every job you meet and then you lose touch and then you meet again. After *Cat In The Brain* we didn't really have a relationship in the last five years before he passed away. A lawyer called me about something in the US and I met his daughter Antonella again, and it was like being family again. She was so sweet with me. She said, "My Dad loved you so much."

HV: Tarantino sampled *The Psychic* for *Kill Bill*.

How do you feel about your music being used for a different film?

FF: Well, I got a letter from my publisher about the Tarantino production and I was very moved when I saw the scene because I had written the theme on the piano in my Dad's house. But when you hear something that is yours in another film in another situation, it's incredible! When you see something really well done, it leaves you speechless, and that scene was absolutely fantastic.

HV: *The Psychic* soundtrack was the last that you, Bixio and Tempera worked on together. Why?

FF: It wasn't my idea to be together, it was our publisher's, and I had to decide whether it was myself or the group that I valued. It was like it was built in a laboratory, so I think after the experimentation I said, "Thank you very much, now we go out into the world." I have a great relationship with them and we are friends. But since that time I've chosen to work by myself. [It's like the relationship between] a father and a daughter: when she is three years old it is like "Yes Dad," but when she grows up it is "No". When I was in the group I was only 23 but as I grew up I had my own ideas, I wanted to express myself my way. Vincenzo was like a brother but I had to say, "Brother, I have to go."

HV: Your tour with the Frizzzi2Fulci musicians. How has that come about?

FF: When I met Lucio's daughter Antonella about 12 years ago and with the growth of the internet I understood that people were saying, "Fabio is one of the referenced musicians". I looked at Facebook and other things and they're talking about "The legend that is Fulci & Frizzi"! I had almost forgotten, and it's a beautiful memory. I introduced a few movies and I just thought, "Why don't we tell everybody what we did?" As a sort of tribute. So about four years ago I made up my mind, and I found the musicians and wrote a suite of all the music I had done with him. When I arrived in London [for a concert] at Union Chapel, I couldn't believe what I saw in front of me, so many people crazy for that music. So I said to my friend, I understood what Mick Jagger felt like!

Chills In The Chapel With Fabio Frizzi takes place on 29 October at the Union Chapel, Islington.
www.unionchapel.org.uk

"The Beyond and Zombi 2 were the most beautiful work we did together"

ABOVE

City Of The Living Dead: one third of Fulci's classic Gates Of Hell trilogy.

BELOW

A shot from last Halloween's Chills In The Chapel show.

FF: He told me, "The producer has someone else, so unfortunately I cannot give you the job." So I said OK and I didn't do it.

HV: *The Beyond* and

Manhattan Baby were equally revered and reviled by fans and critics. What did you think of these films yourself?

FF: I think *The Beyond* and *Zombi 2* were the most beautiful work we did together. I'm sure *Manhattan Baby* is not the same as *The Beyond* but in some moments you can see Lucio being poetic, like the hand of the baby. There's something magical and something technical that you can enjoy when looking at the movie but it's not as structured as the others.

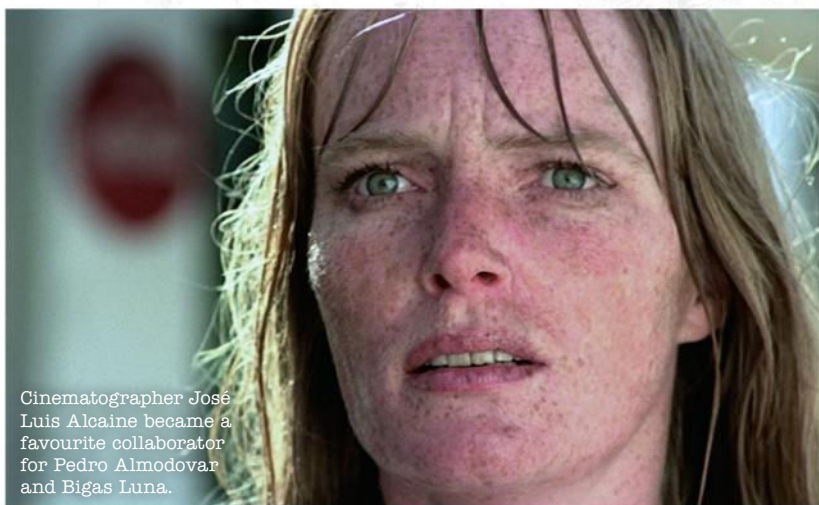


Forgotten NIGHTMARES

WHO CAN KILL A CHILD?



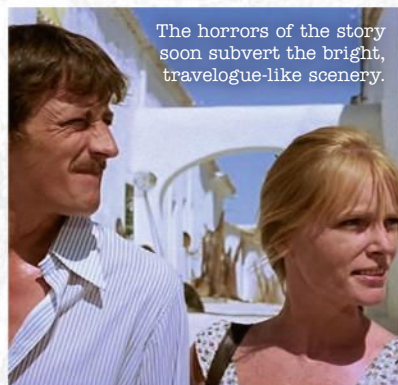
Part of the shock is the contrast between stark gore and the blithe faces of the kids who inflict it.



Cinematographer José Luis Alcaine became a favourite collaborator for Pedro Almodóvar and Bigas Luna.



Unlike in many horror films, the action takes place in broad daylight.



The horrors of the story soon subvert the bright, travelogue-like scenery.



To be honest, they'd have been better off going to Corfu.

WHO CAN KILL A CHILD?

RELEASED
1976

WRITERS Juan José Plans, Luis Peñañel
DIRECTOR Narciso Ibáñez Serrador
AKA ¿Quién puede matar a un niño?; Island of the Damned
STARRING Lewis Fiander, Prunella Ransome

MURDER IS CHILD'S PLAY IN THIS EERIE, BRUTAL SPANISH CHILLER... WORDS BY WILL SALMON

Horror cinema is full of evil children, from the golden-eyed aliens of *Village Of The Damned* to the sickle-wielding Children of the Corn. But arguably none are as genuinely unnerving as the inhabitants of the Spanish island of Almanzora in Narciso Ibáñez Serrador's *Who Can Kill A Child?*

Never heard of it? You're not alone. The 1976 horror was the very definition of a barely-seen classic until it received a belated DVD release in 2007. That disc revealed a film that sits somewhere between the eerie, daylight chills of *The Wicker Man* and the frank bloodshed of *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*, and it's since been cited by the likes of Mark Gatiss, Eli Roth and Edgar Wright as a film that crawled under their skin.

THE CHILDREN'S CRUSADE

The plot is simple. Middle-aged couple Tom and Evelyn are holidaying in Spain. Tom wants to revisit Almanzora, where he stayed as a child. When they arrive, however, they find the island almost entirely deserted. The sound of children playing draws them out onto the streets and eventually they find some kids striking a piñata, but it's not sweets hanging up there... The truth is rapidly revealed: the kids have taken over the island and murdered all of the adults. Hunted by the infernal infants, Tom and Evelyn are forced to fight back. But as the title asks, what human adult could bring themselves to kill a child – even one that's trying to kill you?

The film is based on Juan José Plans' novel *El juego de los niños* (*The Children's Game*), released the same year. Serrador stripped the story of its more sci-fi aspects. "In the novel what provokes the children's rebellion against the adults is a yellow powder that falls all over the village," Serrador says on the Eureka DVD release. He describes this as "a little bit absurd and fantasy-like," which is a little bit rich in a film about maniacal children seizing an island, but there's no doubt that the film is stronger for dispensing with this element. Instead, we are presented with an opening montage which

"When it does erupt into violence, it conjures some memorably horrible images"


doesn't so much suggest a theme as punch you repeatedly until you get it...


The film opens with the sound of a child laughing, then moves into a gruelling seven-minute compilation of newsreel footage, focusing on the real-life suffering of children, mostly in the Holocaust and various wars. Most people will want to switch off here, or at least skip ahead. It's a blunt and brutal beginning, making the point that the horrors humankind inflicted on itself in the 20th Century were felt most keenly by the young. The implication is

clear: with all this violence and cruelty, who can blame them for fighting back?

But this isn't just a slightly heavy-handed polemic. First and foremost it's a chiller – and a deeply atmospheric one at that. The early scenes, with partying locals and bathers at the beach, have some of the travelogue feel of a 1970s Bond movie, undercut with a constant sense of dread. Indeed, when we finally get to Almanzora, the film looks even better, with Serrador making the most of the gorgeous, sun-bleached landscape and clean white buildings. The long periods of silence or dislocated sound effects – a child's laugh, or a mysteriously ringing telephone – build up a real sense of anticipation. And when the movie does erupt into violence, it conjures some memorably horrible images: that human piñata, a street beating and, finally, the scene

where Tom is forced to decide if he can live up to the film's title...

Evil children are hard to make work credibly. *Who Can Kill A Child?* works so well because it exploits our biological and cultural programming that says they are innocents to be protected at all costs. The result is a film that makes you frightened of its pre-teen terrors, while also hopeful for them. Maybe they'll remake this fictional world in their image, and perhaps it will be better than the brutal one the adults have left for them. 

 **DID YOU KNOW...** THE FILM WAS REMADE IN 2012 AS *COME OUT AND PLAY* – A SOLID, IF LESS EFFECTIVE, TRANSLATION THAT STUCK EXTREMELY CLOSELY TO SERRADOR'S ORIGINAL.

Marathon Man

#1 A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET

One horror fan, a whole heap of movies... **Ian Berriman** takes on the Freddy franchise



Could there be a more appropriate choice for *Horrorville*'s first binge-watch than a series all about struggling to stay awake? We have an unknown homeless man to thank, for lurking outside writer/director Wes Craven's childhood home one night – along with reports of traumatised Cambodian refugees mysteriously dying in their sleep, and Gary Wright's 1975 synth-pop hit "Dream Weaver". All three combined to inspire Freddy Krueger. The resulting franchise was a huge commercial success throughout the '80s and '90s, with Robert Englund's burn-faced bogeyman becoming an unlikely pop culture icon.

A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET (1984)



Welcome to Springfield, Ohio, where 15-year-old Nancy Thompson and friends are all dreaming of a creepy guy with a bladed glove – how very Struwwelpeter. Eventually we learn he's Freddy Krueger, dead child killer. A cock-up at trial freed him; Springfield's parents torched him; now he's killing their kids via their dreams.

With his stretchy arms, suggestive tongue-wiggling and penchant for gleeful self-mutilation, Freddy cuts a powerfully odd figure. And his get-up – fedora, red and green-striped jumper – seems a tad conspicuous. Did they burn him at Christmas? (Apparently Craven

picked the colours cos of the way they clash.)

I love two death scenes in particular: Nancy's friend Tina is dragged across the ceiling as an invisible Freddy slashes her; then boyfriend Glen (a fresh-faced Johnny Depp) erupts from his bed as a geyser of blood – he must have had about 50 pints pumping round! I LOL when a cop informs an arriving ambulanceman, "You'll need a mop." Clearly he missed the sensitivity training.

Nancy's an indomitable heroine – I cheer when she *rugby-tackles* Krueger! Sometimes it seems Freddy *can* affect reality – like making an unplugged phone ring – and the ending is confusingly unclear. But overall this is a delight – a darkly humorous urban fairytale.



Images: Adam Gussom / New Line Cinema / Warner Bros

A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET 2: FREDDY'S REVENGE (1985)



Elm Street 2 is so damn horny. Screwing is all its high school kids seem to talk about. Early on we're also told a baseball coach "hangs around queer S&M joints" – and later we pay one a visit.

There's a noticeable gay subtext here – one the writer's only recently admitted was intentional. With Nancy out of the picture, Freddy uses Jesse – who's moved into her old house – as a conduit, initially driving the lad to "kill for me", then

literally bursting out of his body. At one point Jesse heads to his jock buddy's bedroom for some reassurance...

These hints of a protagonist struggling with their sexuality are interesting. But having Freddy pass from dreams into reality seems like a rule-break too far. Some of the "shocks" are feeble – yikes, a toaster caught fire! And a setpiece where that coach dies having his arse whipped with towels in the showers makes me squirm – it feels like the character's being punished for their sexuality.

Bonus points awarded for: a racially dubious breakfast cereal called Fu Man Chews; a shot of a hand swarming with ants (very *Un Chien Andalou*...); the line, "Animals don't just explode into flames for no reason!", which I may get as a tattoo.



A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET 3: DREAM WARRIORS (1987)



Dream Warriors thankfully resets Freddie's MO and brings back Nancy, now working at a psychiatric hospital. I can't imagine why her boss is so quick to believe this pretty intern's theories...

The script hinges on the idea that in dreams we get special abilities. Really? Mine generally involve panicking about my A-Level Computer Studies project or desperately needing a pee – but it's still a neat concept. Realising this, teen patients team up to kick Freddy's ass. Patricia Arquette's Kristen can flip and tumble. Role-player Will can go full wizard. And token black dude Kincaid, er, calls Freddy "a burnt-face pussy" and stuff. Cos he's "street".

This is where Freddy's compulsive quipping really takes hold, and his kills start being ironically fitting – so for example a girl eager for TV fame gets her head jammed in a set. I half expect some Oompa Loompas to deliver a cautionary song.

There are some impressively weird effects – like needle marks on a junkie's arm becoming hungry mouths (Englund says the make-up took seven hours... then they realised it was the wrong arm). Plus there's major new lore: Freddy's mother was a nun gang-raped by asylum inmates, making him "the bastard son of a hundred maniacs"! Not exactly a destigmatising approach to mental illness, and I'm pretty sure *that's not how sperm works*. But hey, it's a great line.

A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET 4: THE DREAM MASTER (1988)



Flaming dog piss. That's all you really need to know about *The Dream Master*. Flaming. Dog. Piss.

Elm Street 3 closed with Freddy's bones laid to rest. *Elm Street 4* resurrects him in a dream, as Kincaid's dog slices the ground apart by cocking a leg to spray a jet of fiery urine. Is this the pooch's special dream ability? I glance at my cat, dozing on a nearby chair, and wonder if he's dreaming of shooting laser beams from his arsehole.

We see Freddy off the Dream Warriors one by one, leaving Kristen's meek and mousy friend Alice. Somehow as they croak

she's gaining their skills – though sadly not the ability to do a flamethrower wee.

Dream Master has its moments – a sequence where Alice gets stuck in a time-loop is clever, and has me briefly wondering if I've sat on the remote control – but this now feels like a series which, short on ideas, is reduced to dialing up the weirdness, with teens turned into pizza toppings, or roaches in a trap.

Ultimately Alice defeats him by conveniently remembering a children's rhyme (where she heard this, god knows). Turns out all you have to do is show Freddy a mirror! What a load of cobblers. Still, flaming dog piss eh? Awesome.



A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET 5: THE DREAM CHILD (1989)



A Dream Child, you say? But *whose* child? Alice's – she's pregnant, and the foetus is dreaming! They're pretty darn

rather well. A third rips off Japanese body-horror *Tetsuo*, as Alice's boyfriend becomes enmeshed with his motorbike.

The latter scene is the nadir of Freddy-quips, with him babbling “Fast lane!” and “Power drive!” like a *Sun* sub editor desperately brainstorming a punning headline. We finally jump the shark when Freddy turns into a muscular “SuperFreddy”, quipping, “Faster than a bastard maniac!” Oh dear.

Far funnier: when Freddy transforms into tarantulas and we cut to Alice's foot carefully stamping *nowhere near 'em*. I picture someone from the American Humane Association sternly observing, arms crossed.

complex dreams. How could an unborn child dream of people and places it's never seen? Best not to think about it. Or anything about the plot, really.

Dream Child hurls all manner of shit at the wall in the hope that something will stick. A sequence where a comics geek is dragged into monochrome panels has me humming A-Ha's “Take On Me”. Another homage to the impossible geography of Escher prints –

FREDDY'S DEAD: THE FINAL NIGHTMARE (1991)



Good thing about *Elm Street 6*: it gets back to basics, as troubled teens ignorant of Freddy break out from a shelter and end up in Springwood. Fresh meat! Bad thing about it: we learn Freddy has a child in a “Krueger 101” lecture delivered by a deranged teacher, as if this is old news. You what?! I sort of admire the utter shamelessness of it.

The kills are still outlandish and over-elaborate – one sees Freddy cranking up a deaf kid's hearing aid, then sadistically dropping pins – but none are as stupid as SuperFreddy, thank god.

And the “Who's Krueger Jr?” mystery (I won't spoil it for you...) entails some rather nifty flashbacks. Hard though it is to buy “the bastard son of a thousand maniacs” ever having a family, there's something effectively creepy about placing him in a suburban setting, and it's nice to see Robert Englund sans make-up – especially as that make-up now looks a bit rubbish. Freddy's burned face should look raw and fresh (they used to dab on KY jelly so it'd glisten!). Here it seems to be made out of plasticine.

Favourite spot: a poster in the shelter that declares, “SMOKING IS VERY GLAMOROUS”. Maybe it's an attempt at reverse psychology?



WES CRAVEN'S NEW NIGHTMARE (1994)



What a breath of fresh air! Marking Wes Craven's return to the series, *New Nightmare* sees the writer/director

taking a wittily metafictional approach to his creation, with Freddy – or, strictly speaking, an ancient entity that's taken his form – invading the real life of star Heather Langenkamp (Nancy), menacing her son, and killing the crew on a new *Elm Street* movie.

Though often bracketed with Craven's equally self-aware *Scream*, *New Nightmare* has a different intent: not to mine the conventions of horror movies for comedy, but to dignify these films as artistically valid, placing Freddy in the same lineage as classic fairytales.

It's a simple idea, but works so well, particularly in a surreal

scene where Langenkamp visits Craven and discovers that the script he's working on includes the very conversation they've just had! Mindfuck! I also love a sequence where Langenkamp

visits screen dad John Saxon for guidance, only for them to slowly slide into their on-screen personas. I even kinda like the new-look Freddy, who now rather resembles an anatomical drawing

of a skinned cadaver.

New Nightmare is Robert Englund's favourite *Elm Street* movie, and I totally appreciate why. If only more horror sequels were this ingenious!



FREDDY VS JASON (2003)



The idea of an *Elm Street/Friday The 13th* crossover had been floating around for years. *F Vs J* finally brings it about by

having Krueger manipulating Voorhees, sending the big oaf to Springwood (conveniently only a short drive from Camp Crystal Lake, it seems), where Freddy's now pretty much been forgotten, to spread fear amongst the teenage population and give him back his power. This plan has one obvious flaw: the moment people eyeball a 6' 5" psycho in a hockey mask they should suss Freddy's not to blame. But it works. Then Freddy gets the hump cos Jason won't stop killing "his kids". Well, it makes more sense than *Batman Vs Superman*...

F Vs J looks expensive, and has some impressive stunt work, but director Ronny Yu's stylistic choices begin to piss me off. I like extreme lighting as much as the



next Dario Argento fan, but Yu cuts between scenes tinted totally red or blue so regularly that I start to miss seeing the whole spectrum. And a moment where

it's revealed that Jason's *afraid of water* makes me feel offended on his behalf – what next, Jason jumping on a chair at the sight of a mouse? But the film nails the

main thing: the two setpiece boogeyman battles are hugely entertaining. It all ends, as it should, in an intensely violent score draw.

DON'T FALL ASLEEP!

Ian may be about to have some very bad dreams...



A NIGHTMARE ON ELM STREET (2010)



And so, finally, to the inevitable remake. The intent is clear from the titles, with their grunge-chic images of animal skulls and hopscotch markings: to cut the camp and make Freddy Krueger a serious threat again.

To some degree, this works, as new Freddy Jackie Earl Haley ditches the one-liners for a menacing bass rumble. The script also has a smart innovation: "micro-naps", split-second sleep episodes which allow them to drop in jolting jump scares without warning.

Three things bug me, though. Firstly, Freddy's new look – probably a more realistic depiction of a burns victim. It takes me a while to work out what its dark, wrinkly textures remind me of. Then it hits me: a tortoise! Secondly, he seems strangely reluctant to actually *kill* Nancy, more interested in chatting.

Then there's the controversial way the film revisits Wes Craven's original intention, making Freddy not just a child-killer but a

paedophile. I don't necessarily think this subject should be out of bounds for horror, but scenes like one where shocked teens discover Polaroids of the abuse they've blocked out make for uncomfortable viewing. Maybe that's how it should be – I always found the phenomenon of Freddy fans cheering on a child-killer odd – but the result is a film that's hard to actually *enjoy*. It's with considerable relief that I hit eject for the final time. 🚫

Five things I learnt

Child-murdering serial killers sew name tags in their hats, just like your mum did with your school jumper. (*A Nightmare On Elm Street*)

Booby Traps And Improvised Anti-Personnel Devices is a book you can easily pick up at the local library. (*A Nightmare On Elm Street*)

You can turn anywhere into consecrated ground – even a scrapyard – just by splashing about some holy water stolen from a church's font. (*Dream Warriors*)

Springwood cemetery policy is to bury all a murderer's victims close together. Thoughtful. (*The Dream Master*)

Ohio didn't have the internet in 2003, making it possible to cover up a series of murders by simply redacting library microfiche. (*Freddy Vs Jason*)

CLAW MARKS



POD PEOPLE



HORROR PODCASTING IS BOOMING, WITH SHOWS LIKE *WELCOME TO NIGHT VALE* AND *ARCHIVE 81* CREEPING US OUT ON A REGULAR BASIS. JOIN *PSEUDOPOD* HOST **ALASDAIR STUART** AS HE GUIDES YOU DOWN THE DARKEST OF THE DARK AIR WAVES...





The Black Tapes

<http://bit.ly/1LwdXuS>

Alex Regan, a podcaster for a company called PNWS, is putting together a story on

Richard Strand. The head of the Strand Institute and a legendary paranormal debunker, Strand is a haunted figure. As Alex gets closer to him, she finds out why – and her journey takes her deep within the Black Tapes and a decades-wide plan that she and Strand are caught right in the centre of...

The Black Tapes is a good weekly listen and an incredible long form one. We're most of the way through season two now and tiny plot threads from early episodes are getting folded back in to create a vast, savagely clever story. We spoke to creators Paul Bae and Terry Miles to find out more.

Why did you start podcasting?

We're both storytellers from the worlds of film and television. Paul was a comedian/actor and host of a daily comedy-news show, and Terry is a writer/director/producer. We have an abundance of stories to tell and podcasting provided a way to tell our stories quickly and cheaply while allowing us to retain full artistic control.

What make *The Black Tapes* unique?

Shows like *Serial* and *Welcome To Night Vale* laid the groundwork for the broad spectrum of fictional and non-fictional storytelling modes we have today, but at the time of our release in May 2015, the only scary podcasting series were the anthology collections (like *The NoSleep Podcast* and *Pseudopod*) or contemporary radio dramas like *We're Alive*. There were no docudramas told through the lens of a trusted journalist-narrator. So we made *The Black Tapes*. And to see so many successful series in that style now like *Limetown* and *The Message* confirms to us that it was a style or sub-sub-genre that was begging to be formed.

Why horror?

As a narrative genre, it's just so much fun because it's so visceral, so immediate. But it's the kind of thing that lingers after the story's done being told. It keeps you up at night, flinching at every sound in the house, wondering about every dark corner of your room. It stays with you. And since we grew up on a healthy diet of horror (King, Lovecraft, Carpenter...), it seemed like the perfect genre to play in. Especially with podcasting, we can be in someone's ear, giving it a sense of intimacy. It's like when we were kids and telling ghost stories to our friends, except now it's to a lot more friends.

What advice would you give new podcasters?

Try to produce as many episodes as possible in advance of your launch. Production issues always arise and set you back in terms of scheduling, so it's smart to do as much in advance as possible so you're not playing catch-up every week.



Welcome To Night Vale/Night Vale Presents

<http://bit.ly/2a1Wzi>

Night Vale is an absolutely normal town. No, it is. Just ask Cecil Baldwin, Night Vale's DJ. Or his boyfriend Carlos, who's a scientist. Or the Glow Cloud – the sentient vapour which rains dead lizards. Just, under no circumstances, look at the Dog Park...

Night Vale's combination of comedy, horror and remarkable sweetness has made it a worldwide phenomenon. The show tells a densely plotted but enthralling story. Start at the beginning and let Cecil guide you through the town's many mysteries.

Night Vale has proven so successful it has spawned two new shows, released under the same banner but standing alone. *Alice Isn't Dead*, performed by Jasika Nicole (best known for playing Agent Farnsworth on *Fringe*), is the story of a trucker searching for her wife through a nightmarish tour of backroads America.

The second, *Within The Wires*, has just started. It's a series of "relaxation tapes" given to you by The Institute. Calm, sinister and slowly revealing a very personal story, *Wires* is the hardest of the shows to get into, but also the most audacious.



Tanis

<http://bit.ly/29ZYfvN>

Nic Silver, Alex's PNWS production partner, gets a case of his own in this "sidequel" to *The Black Tapes*. One that centres on a conspiracy that may pre-date humanity...

Tanis is an almost intimidatingly ambitious show. At times it bows under the weight of the sheer volume of information but like *The Black Tapes* it's all starting to pay off in its second season. Start at the beginning and take notes, or refer to the show's extensive website. It's a demanding listen, but take a run up at it – it's worth it.



Uncanny County

<http://bit.ly/29Ynq3P>

A series of full cast audio plays all set in the same weird area of the US. Think *American Gothic* with more jokes.

The production values are top notch and the stories are a neat combination of old school horror/SF and some playful and very new approaches to horror. You can start anywhere with the show, but "The Eleventh Hour" – an episode about just how much work goes into arriving in the nick of time – is especially good.



Limetown

<http://bit.ly/1L6lCVh>

Want a show that's gripping, terrifying and finite? You need to visit Limetown. Years after the disappearance of the entire population of a privately owned town, journalist Lia Haddock begins investigating what really happened...

Limetown is one of the best audio drama podcasts you'll ever hear, with twists in every episode and a horrific central premise. Another show you should jump on at the beginning, listen to, get hooked on and join the queue for a second season.



Small Town Horror

<http://bit.ly/2a5wiq6>

In 1998 Ryan Jennings recorded himself performing "The Sinner's Game" – a ritual local to his hometown of Crayton, Indiana. He fled the town not long after. Now he's back to try and find out what happened to him all those years ago.

A great premise, a couple of killer twists and excellent hosting bring this podcast to life. A neat combination of personal recollection, small town homecoming and skin crawling horror, it's a new show so now's a great time to jump aboard.



Archive 81

<http://bit.ly/2a1C205>

Three months ago Daniel Powell vanished. These are the tapes he sent his best friend...

A story within a story, *Archive 81* follows Daniel as he starts a summer job organising the chaotic audio records of one of his predecessors. She was collecting oral histories from the residents of an apartment block but, as she and Daniel find out, there's something terrible in the building...

Another impressive "found audio" show and one that has a unique, quirky charm to it. We caught up with creators Marc Powell and Daniel Sollinger.

Why did you start a horror podcast?

Dan: My dad let me watch *The Evil Dead* when I was probably too young to see it, which pretty much engendered a life-long love of creepy tales. Marc and I are both big horror fans. We had been discussing the idea of a found-footage horror audio drama for a while and *Archive 81* just organically emerged out of those discussions.

Marc: Because scary shit is awesome! I've always been a big fan of psychological horror, especially in audio form. There's a long tradition of scaring the pants off of people by using the power of sound, from people around a campfire to Orson Welles' Halloween prank. It's a tradition I'm proud to be part of.

What's your favourite episode so far?

Dan: I really love episode four. In addition to being a lot of fun to put together from a production standpoint, the concept of shuffling through miscellaneous oddities on tape reminds me of tuning into the radio and hearing something strange and unknown – the sense of wonder and awe that comes from that.

Marc: Yup, episode four. It was so much fun to write! I think the extra tapes in that episode make the world of *Archive 81* seem larger and weirder and less knowable.

What advice would you give to new podcasters?

Dan: Study your favourite shows closely, and pay attention to how they tell a story. Read transcripts and get familiar with how material is arranged for the ear. Use good equipment, but more importantly, use good recording techniques. A well-placed \$50 microphone will sound better than a poorly-placed \$1,200 microphone.

Marc: Have a strong hook. Ask yourself "if I was a listener, would I be engaged?" Your listeners aren't going to keep tuning in because they like you. They'll tune in because you're giving them gripping stuff to listen to.



The NoSleep Podcast

<http://bit.ly/29Q7MdJ>

David Cummings' epic anthology is five years old in 2016 and showing no signs of slowing down.

David's strong hosting skills and mic presence tie together a show with a whopping four or five stories in each episode.

Even if you don't like one story, the next will probably work for you. The anthology format means you can start anywhere, but be prepared to clear your schedule...



Pseudopod

<http://bit.ly/1DRfgnN>

Full disclosure: this is my show. We're a decade-old horror fiction podcast that showcases a single short story every week.

We're just about to celebrate our 500th episode – I've been on board for 450 of those as the host and, these days, I'm the owner too. I love doing it, getting the chance to not just talk about brilliant stories but learn from them too. Any episode is a great place to start but I'd recommend episode 433: "20 Simple Steps To Ventriloquism" by Jon Padgett. Just don't listen to it while looking in a mirror...



The Magnus Archives

<http://bit.ly/2aeYZRX>

The Magnus Institute is the premier paranormal research facility on the planet, and new Chief Archivist Jonathan Sims has taken on the

mammoth task of recording audio transcriptions of every file. The Institute has been active for centuries and as Sims, whose charmingly grumpy mic presence is a highlight, digs deeper he finds out they've stumbled on something awful.

One of the best "found footage" shows out there, we'd recommend you start at the beginning. We spoke to creator Jonny Sims to find out more...

Tell us a little about the show

It's a series of personal statements regarding encounters with the paranormal, as read by a new archivist trying to make sense of the disarray in the files of the Magnus Institute. Each is nominally a standalone little horror story, but with common threads that start to weave a much larger picture. Who knows what terrors await when the archivist begins to connect the dots...

Why did you start a podcast?

I used to work nights and the office was quiet, so I'd fill my ears with podcasts. It really made me realise how direct and powerful it can be, just someone pouring story into your ears. So when Alex Newall (who runs [production company] Rusty Quill) mentioned he was setting up a podcasting network, I knew what to pitch.

What's your favourite episode so far?

I really enjoy the ones where I have to do a lot of research and, of those, the most interesting was "Lost John's Cave" [episode 15]. It was fascinating to learn about, came together quite nicely in the writing and Alex and the production team absolutely nailed the edit. I also really like "The Piper" [episode seven].

What podcasts do you listen to?

I started listening to horror ones before there were many, when it was pretty much just *Pseudopod*, *NoSleep Podcast* and *Knifepoint Horror* (this last one was a big influence on *Magnus*). There weren't enough podcasts to fill the long nights back then, so I supplemented them with old-school radio shows like *Nightfall* and *Light's Out*. These days there's the opposite problem, too many good horror podcasts and not enough time.

What advice would you give to new podcasters?

Find the right co-conspirators – people who have the same vision but will challenge you, if necessary. It doesn't matter if you can write, record, edit, publish, publicise and maintain infrastructure all by yourself – if you're not part of a great team, you're going to have a difficult time of it. 🎧

REVIEW FILM



BITE GUARD

Isn't she a bit young to be cosplaying Hannibal Lecter?



IMPRISONED

Treated like this, is it any wonder Mel and the kids are a bit ticked off?

THE GIRL WITH ALL THE GIFTS

Classy 'zombie' thriller with bite

The last time Hollywood attempted an epic, apocalyptic zombie thriller we ended up with Marc Forster's wildly ambitious, ridiculously expensive and utterly forgettable adaptation of Max Brooks' novel, *World War Z*. The undead-themed thrillers we've seen since have been smaller, character-based pieces like *Maggie*.

The Girl With All The Gifts sits somewhere between the two approaches. It's grand in scope and told across the backdrop of a ravaged world some time in the future, but the story is pleasingly character-led and never overshadowed by its set-pieces.

20 years ago the majority of humankind was mutated by a fungal

Day Of The Dead by way of Guantanamo Bay. The children, strapped into wheelchairs, physically and verbally abused, immediately elicit your sympathy. We know they're dangerous, but surely no one deserves treating like this... do they?

Base teacher Helen Justineau (Gemma Arterton) certainly doesn't think so. She's formed a bond with the kids – particularly Melanie (newbie Sennia Nanua). When a hungry attack overwhelms the base, Helen becomes her guardian as they set off to another base, schlepping across the countryside with a group of soldiers led by Sgt Parks (a growly Paddy Considine) and the shifty Dr Caldwell (Glenn Close). Unfortunately that means venturing into the ruins of fallen, overgrown and hungry-infested London...

DETAILS

CERTIFICATE
15

OUT
23 September

DIRECTOR
Colm McCarthy

STARRING
Glenn Close,
Gemma Arterton,
Paddy Considine,
Sennia Nanua,
Fisayo Akinade

young newcomer, but she also captures the character's unpredictability and inherent menace. You're never quite sure which way Mel is going to turn, which lends her scenes with Arterton a nice tension. They care for each other, but Mel's gotta eat, and doesn't quite know how to control her impulses.

The film is not without its problems. One minor character does something so bafflingly, irritatingly stupid in the service of the plot that you really don't care when they run into trouble. Coincidence plays too strong a part in the proceedings. And there is, inevitably, a strong sense of déjà vu throughout. Anyone who has seen a zombie film – any zombie film – before will know these story beats, even though they are well done here. The final act, too, may prove divisive. It's faithful to the novel, but tonally jarring.

Still, the whole film is made with such craft and care that it's easy to forgive these niggles. Cristobal Tapia de Veer's music is an understated and unsettling presence throughout, lending the film a sickly tone that matches the disgusting look of the hungries. The attacks are well-staged – particularly the epic battle for the base, which comes as a welcome contrast to the claustrophobic opening act. It looks gorgeous too – with eerie widescreen shots of the overgrown city contrasted with the small, sad sight of a young girl trapped behind a transparent Hannibal Lecter-style face mask. Indeed, this is one of the most evocative screen portrayals of abandoned London yet, less instantly iconic than *28 Days Later*...'s stroll across Westminster Bridge but more grounded in the everyday and creepier for it. **WILL SALMON**

“You’re never sure which way Mel is going to turn. She’s gotta eat and can’t control her hunger”

spore. *Ophiocordyceps unilateralis* (a real thing, as it turns out and, well... up!) transforms people into feral, ravenous “hungries”. These monsters have enhanced senses but have reverted to savagery. They're not undead but they certainly act like zombies, or *28 Days Later*... 'rage' victims.

A group of soldiers and scientists at a military research base are studying the effects of the fungus on children who were born to infected parents. They look like normal kids, they talk like normal kids, but get too close to them without blocker gel on and their stomachs' start rumbling and their jaws start snapping...

The Girl With All The Gifts' opening act is astonishingly effective. It's a good 20 minutes, or so, before we see anything of the outside world and the base, with its windowless rooms and grey metal corridors feels like a nod to Romero's

Fans of MR Carey's novel will be pleased to hear that *Peaky Blinders* director Colm McCarthy remains broadly faithful to the original, deviating in a few places, but without changing the point or spirit of the original. This is a modern zombie movie with brains and heart to go alongside its violence (pleasingly full-blooded). Crucially, it nails the scenes set in the city. That's where the film takes a turn for the strange, as we see more of the fungus itself, with one famous landmark transformed into something ominous and strange.

Arterton and Considine make for a likeable pairing, even as they butt heads, and Close is as watchable as ever – though you're never in any doubt that she's up to more than she's letting on. But holding everything together is Sennia Nanua. It's a remarkably natural, likeable performance from the

HORRORVILLE SAYS:

A mainstream zombie film with bite. Smart, stylish and affecting, *Girl* really is a gift.

RATING 



IVAN, WOAH!
An intimidating
Gary Stretch as
the dastardly dad.

MY FATHER DIE

Vengeance is fine

My *Father Die* doesn't feature a trace of the supernatural, the problems its characters face are ones that real people can and do encounter. But Sean Brosnan's blood-soaked feature debut is terrifying enough to more than qualify as horror. A tale of familial revenge in the American South, it's 50% art-house exploration of obsession and 50% bloody grindhouse thriller.

The film opens with an intense black and white prologue, in which 12 year old Asher (Gabe White) is forced to watch on as his older brother is beaten to death by their father, Ivan (Gary Stretch). Years later, a now deaf and mute Asher (played by Joe Anderson) pledges to track down and kill his dad when he's released from prison. Big mistake, son...

My Father Die joins the likes of Jeremy Saunier's *Blue Ruin* and Shane

Meadows' *Dead Man's Shoes* in the pantheon of great modern revenge flicks. Utilising an array of striking directorial styles, Brosnan has created an instantly gripping thriller with a sly sense of humour.

BAD DAD

The cast is key to the film's success. Stretch is simply terrifying as Ivan. Brutal, unstoppable and not overly fond of talking things over politely, he's like a Southern Terminator. An early attack takes him out of the story temporarily, but you always know that, like Michael Myers or Jason Vorhees, he'll be up and killing again soon.

Anderson, too, is superb – by turns funny, sweet and alarming, it's a showcase role for him. An early sequence sees Asher kidnap a woman connected with Ivan and you genuinely don't know how it's going to play out. But as the film progresses he channels this live-wire quality into something

DETAILS

CERTIFICATE

TBC

OUT

TBC

DIRECTOR

Sean Brosnan

STARRING

Joe Anderson,
Gary Stretch,
Candace Smith,
John Schneider,
Thomas Francis
Murphy

more vulnerable. Also impressive is Candace Smith as Nana, who brings an intensity and strength to a role that could have easily come off as a victim.

There's a dash of trash cinema in the film's DNA, with its gangsters, strippers and a climactic car chase. And yet, there's also a maturity that raises the film above pastiche. And it looks simply gorgeous thanks to Marc Shap's cinematography. The music and sound design is also hauntingly evocative, bringing to mind everything from Angelo Badalamenti to alt-Americana weirdo Jandek. Dark, dangerous and thrillingly bold, *My Father Die* is a seriously impressive debut. **WILL SALMON**

HORRORVILLE SAYS:

A striking Southern revenge thriller with an intimidating villain and lush visuals.

RATING ★★★★★



WALL CRAWLER

There's no place like home – unfortunately.

UNDER THE SHADOW

House of no fun

“A woman should be more scared of exposing herself than of anything else,” our heroine, Shideh (Narges Rashidi), is told after she’s caught outdoors without her chador. Leaving the house uncovered is a crime punishable by lashes in *Under The Shadow*’s 1980s Tehran setting. But, by now, Shideh’s discovered there are far more frightening things than exposure, more frightening, even, than the bombs regularly hitting her tenement building, bombs that cause blackouts and frantic scrambles to a dark basement...

We’re stopping our description there, as we’re fearful of spoilers, but the above gives you all you need to know about Babak Anvari’s magnificent debut. One, it’s fiercely political – a feminist scream in the face of physical (and psychological) repression. Two, it’s a period piece, as brilliant a

representation of (a very specific) ’80s culture as any you’ve seen. And three, it’s absolutely terrifying.

There’s one more thing we should mention. Shideh is a mother. Her daughter, Dorsa (Avin Manshadi), is key to the plot, and any recommendation of this film. Manshadi delivers arguably the most powerful child performance of 2016, full of feeling and surprise. And surprise should be your priority when viewing *Shadow*. It’s so rich in unexpected imagery, subtle foreshadowing and imaginative moments, it’s an experience you should immerse yourself in with as little foreknowledge as possible. Your reward will be a smartly shot film (one disorientating camera move is as disconcerting as any sudden jump scare) that’ll stay with you long after the closing credits. *Shadow* resonates, and not just because of the horror (though some stark images are truly unforgettable) but the people, who are

DETAILS

CERTIFICATE

TBC

OUT

30 September

DIRECTOR

Babak Anvari

STARRING

Narges Rashidi, Avin Manshadi, Bobby Naderi, Ray Haratian, Arash Marandi

so real you’ll occasionally feel like a voyeur. It’s this close connection to characters we can easily identify with that makes the film so intense. This is a family just like ours, with toys that need putting away. It might be scripted in Farsi, but the emotions are universal.

Like *The Babadook* (the film it will no doubt most be compared to), or *The Witch*, *Under The Shadow* was a Sundance smash, with one major difference – it was snapped up by Netflix for streaming. See it in theatres if you can, or on headphones in a pitch-black room if you can’t. Just make sure you see it, it’s one of the year’s best movies in any genre. **SAM ASHURST**

HORRORVILLE SAYS:

Under The Shadow’s social-political supernatural shocks will stay with you long after the credits.

RATING ★★★★★



KILLER LOOK
Tell you what, Gogglebox is weird these days...

THE GREASY STRANGLER

We would have gone with "The Disco Dismemberer"

Given its abundance of slopping, oozing food stuffs, it's fitting that *The Greasy Strangler* is such an acquired taste. Revelling in the revolting, its tale of an LA-based serial killer is about as button-pushing as gross-out flicks get, presenting a gallery of grotesqueries that would have Roald Dahl cackling with delight. Introducing us to pink-turtleneck-wearing father and son Big Ronnie (Michael St. Michael) and Big Brayden (Sky Elobar), we watch them traipse decaying alleyways and forgotten side streets as they lead a walking disco tour, dispensing spurious trivia nibs alongside a torrent of quotable insults ("I call bullshit on that!").

It's never in question that this duo is odd to the extreme. A sort of grungy Laurel and Hardy, they're funniest as a pair, but things kick up a notch

when Big Ronnie is revealed as the titular ne'er-do-well, his love of icky food taken to an extreme when, naked, he slathers himself in grease and busts out into the night, killing anybody who crosses his path. Here, first-time director Jim Hosking lets loose with a series of outlandish, *Looney Tunes*-esque killings that see eyeballs spurting out of skulls and various body parts gleefully hacked from torsos.

DEAD FUNNY

If the gore's cartoonishly thrilling, though, it's the gags that really (death) grip. Hosking grew up watching *Monty Python* and *The Young Ones*, and that anarchic spirit fizzles here, from the nonsense jokes (entire scenes revolve around repeated lines slung back and forth like grenades) to the wickedly mean interplay between Big Ronnie and Big Brayden. Michael St. Michael deserves special mention

DETAILS

CERTIFICATE
18 TBC

DIRECTOR
Jim Hosking

STARRING
Michael St. Michaels, Sky Elobar, Elizabeth De Razzo, Gil Gex, Abdoulaye Ngom

OUT
7 October

for a performance so uninhibited the word now needs a new definition, while the duo's love interest Janet (played by Elizabeth De Razzo of *Eastbound And Down*) more than holds her own.

At its best, *The Greasy Strangler* is like a horror movie version of a John Waters flick, though there are also echoes of everything from *Stephoe And Son* to *Dumb And Dumber*. Many will balk at its joyously backwards mentality, but for the midnight crowd, this is gory catnip in its purest form. Unapologetically barmy and destined for cultdom, it is, quite simply, full throttle horror entertainment. **JOSHI WINNING**

HORRORVILLE SAYS:

Sick and surreal, *The Greasy Strangler* is a gruesome treat and an exciting directorial debut.

RATING ★★★★★



FACE WITHOUT EYES

The terrifyingly resourceful Blind Man (Stephen Lang).

DON'T BREATHE

Blind Justice

Horror movie boogeymen come in all shapes, sizes and species, but home-invasion thriller *Don't Breathe* presents something a little different – a villain that could kill you with his eyes closed.

Such is the MO of Stephen Lang's unnamed Blind Man, an army vet who lost his sight in the war and came into money after another tragedy – the death of his daughter in a car crash. Living in a decrepit house in the middle of Nowheresville, three thieving teens figure the Blind Man for an easy mark. But there's more going on in the house than the would-be robbers realise, and the Blind Man has no intention of letting them leave alive.

Writer/director Fede Alvarez made a name for himself in horror three years ago with a memorably gruesome remake of *The Evil Dead*. Here he reunites with producer Sam Raimi and

star Jane Levy for a film that proves he's just as capable terrifying with tension as he is by bifurcating tongues. Blood is used sparingly, Alvarez instead eliciting fear by ratcheting the suspense up to seat-squirming levels. With the Blind Man reliant on sound, every step and every breath could mean life or death, the sparse but superb sound design causing a creaky floorboard to deliver one of the film's biggest scares.

Set almost entirely in a single house, Alvarez makes impressive use of the claustrophobic space with some remarkable tracking shots that see the camera swoop between floors and through doors. A standout sequence halfway through has the Blind Man cut the power in the basement, levelling the playing field as the surviving characters stumble between shelves, hoping not to run into certain death.

After the first 20 minutes, dialogue is excised almost entirely. As a result, character development plays second

DETAILS

CERTIFICATE
15

OUT
26 August

DIRECTOR
Fede Alvarez

STARRING
Jane Levy,
Stephen Lang,
Dylan Minnette,
Daniel Zovatto

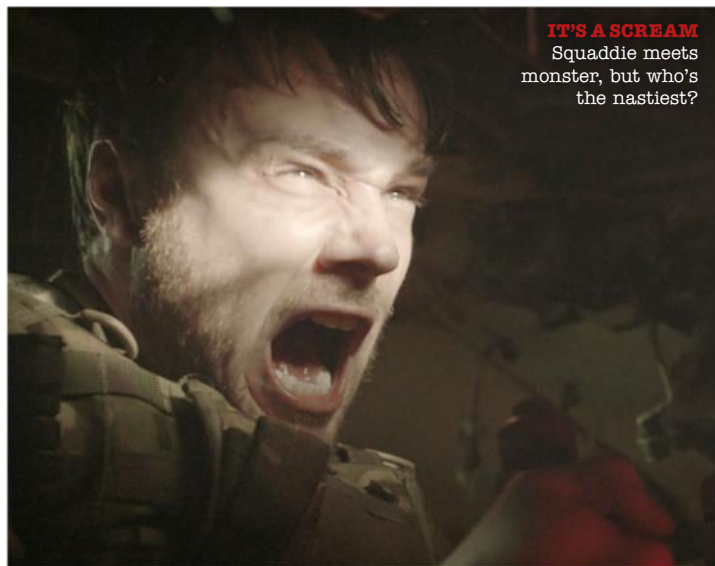
fiddle here, but the three teens all deliver good performances, particularly Jane Levy. This is Lang's show though – imposing and terrifying despite his apparent vulnerability. It's important to note he isn't superhuman, rather he pays close attention to his senses. It makes him all the more unsettling.

There's a secret at the heart of the house that pushes the film into a much sillier place towards the end. And the opening shot is needlessly spoilery, obliterating any concerns about one character's fate for the bulk of the runtime. But otherwise this is confident and captivating filmmaking, and one heck of a ride. **JORDAN EARLEY**

HORRORVILLE SAYS

A claustrophobic chiller that puts an inventive new spin on the home-invasion flick.

RATING ★★★★★



IT'S A SCREAM
Squaddie meets monster, but who's the nastiest?

TANK 432

Bulldog Soldiers...

Exec-produced by *Kill List* and *Sightseers*' Ben Wheatley, and directed by those films' director of photography, *Tank 432* clearly keeps good company. The same can't be said for any of the trapped inhabitants of said vehicle however; a foul-mouthed, short-tempered bunch of mercenary hotheads who seemingly skipped anger management classes to sign up to a mission about which they know absolutely nothing.

It starts promisingly enough, dropping the audience straight into the grotty smudge of warfare – all swears and shattered shinbones – as our hapless antiheroes find themselves retreating from a barely-glimpsed monstrous threat. Grim it might be, but the dizzying panic of the opening scenes are well-staged, hypnotic, and shot through with a strong sense of foreboding. Finding refuge in an abandoned FV432, the soldiers become inexplicably locked inside where the action ends abruptly, becoming as stationary as the

DETAILS

CERTIFICATE
15

DIRECTOR
Nick Gillespie

STARRING
Rupert Evans,
Gordon Kennedy,
Deirdre Mullins

eponymous rusted Bulldog itself. And regrettably, being trapped in the same cramped confines as a troop of charmless mercenaries becomes every bit as joyless and unpleasant as that might sound.

There's simply not enough story to go around here, and the film suffers dreadfully as a result: an endless, dead-eyed, plot-smothering round of bickering that fails to progress or engage. In fact, the only discernible highlight appears to be a soldier literally taking a dump during all the squabbling, something that'll have you reaching for the sickbag or the rewind button, depending on your scatological preferences.

Despite the ever-dependable Michael Smiley lending a brittle menace, the gloomy score and some nightmarish imagery, *Tank 432* stalls, badly. **MILES HAMER**

HORRORVILLE SAYS:

A little flair spread too thinly, its claustrophobia irritates rather than chills.

RATING ★★☆☆☆



PEARL JAM
This woman may be a home owner's worst nightmare.

ABATTOIR

Who lives in a house like this?

Abattoir began life as a pulp horror comic, and there's still a trace of that here – though it's a standalone tale and you don't need to know a thing about the original. With its anachronistic mix of 1940s fashion and modern-day technology – not to mention some extremely chewy dialogue – this supernatural noir doesn't take place in anything like our real world.

Julia (Jessica Lowndes) is a reporter whose family is butchered in a tough early sequence that stands out as the film's most powerful. The killer confesses, but Julia is convinced that there's something more to the crime. With the help of Grady (Joe Anderson), she uncovers an intriguing bit of real estate mythology – a mysterious someone is buying up murder rooms, tearing them out of buildings and using them to make something else...

Bousman has called this a "reverse haunted house movie" about what goes into the construction of such a place,

DETAILS

CERTIFICATE
18

DIRECTOR
Darren Lynn Bousman

STARRING
Jessica Lowndes,
Joe Anderson,
Lin Shaye,
Dayton Callie

rather than the hauntings themselves. It's a clever idea, and Dayton Callie is relishably wicked as Jebediah Crone – when he eventually shows up.

That said, the film suffers from an incoherent tone,

particularly as it moves into its final act in the small town of New English (a place inhabited by stock horror villagers, natch). It wants you to be scared, but the mannered style of the dialogue takes away from that. And while the film has a great sense of style and some impressive visuals, an over-abundance of CGI does detract from them.

All that said, its combination of wild ambition, inventiveness and a solid cast means that it's a fun film with some memorable moments. But much like Jebediah Crone's infernal construction, it doesn't quite fit together. **WILL SALMON**

HORRORVILLE SAYS:

Confused and over-ambitious. Still, there's spark and invention here.

RATING ★★☆☆☆



SHOWRUNNERS The Duffer Brothers
STARRING Winona Ryder, Matthew Modine, Millie Bobby Brown, David Harbour, Charlie Heaton **REVIEWED** Full season

STRANGER THINGS: SEASON 1

Amblin ambition which is out of this world

It snuck onto Netflix without fanfare but a week after the release of this eight-part sci-fi horror no one could talk about anything else. Not so odd perhaps, since *Stranger Things* is one of the most carefully targeted and expertly delivered series in recent memory. It's incredibly derivative – tapping into everything film and TV fans loved best about the '80s – and yet it still feels fresh and surprising at every turn.

Winona Ryder plays single mother Joyce Byers, whose son Will goes missing one night after a game of *Dungeons & Dragons* with his three outsider best mates. The police find his bike, but not Will, so the boys quest into the woods to track down their friend. They don't find him, but they do discover an almost mute, shaven-headed little girl who says that her name is Eleven...

Stranger Things racks up the references from the word go – from the *Goonies*-esque characters to the John Carpenter-inspired score, to the plot and tone which is pure Stephen King meets Steven Spielberg. It's overtly nostalgic but creators The Duffer brothers (who've written a handful of eps of *Wayward Pines* and a horror called *Hidden* and not much else) bring their own new fully developed world. You haven't seen this all before. The kids are exceptional; Eleven (Millie Bobby Brown) particularly is other-worldly and mesmerising. Scary, sweet and visually stunning, a second season has already been announced. Could it even translate to a movie? Stranger things have happened. **PENNY ARCHER**

RATING ★★★★★



SHOWRUNNERS Michael Gans and Richard Register **STARRING** Willa Fitzgerald, Bex Taylor-Klaus, John Karna, Carlson Young, Amadeus Serafini **REVIEWED** Episodes 1-6

SCREAM: SEASON 2

Grab plenty of popcorn to Munch

Do you like scary TV shows? Even hissed from a postmodern Ghostface mask, it still doesn't sound quite as effective, does it? A small scale *Scream* was always going to be a challenge, but after a surprisingly enjoyable first season – once you got over the sassy teen speak and overly large iPhone fonts – the follow up has managed to pick up seamlessly where the bloody fingerprints left off.

Emma Duval (Willa Fitzgerald) is back at school with her fellow twenty-something teenage friends but there's very little her PTSD counselling can do when the attractive lot starts to die once again. Enjoyably, the stakes are higher this time around with only a small group of Lakewood "survivors" left to pick off. Even the addition of plenty of red herring extras can't take away the feeling that anyone could meet something pointy and deadly at any moment. Add in the fact that the characters are given a little more time to become likeable, and you might just care for the meta-mouthed crew even while you want them to just buy new sim cards.

Following *Scream 2*'s horror rules, things are significantly gorier and there's some joyously dark comedy to find in this killer's brand of teen torture. If the first season didn't have you convinced there's probably no hope for you here, but bigger and bloodier set pieces and a commendably twisty plot means a season of trash horror that's definitely worth the Netflix binge. **LOUISE BRAIN**

RATING ★★★★★



SHOWRUNNERS Robert Kirkman and Chris Black **STARRING** Patrick Fugit, Philip Glenister, Wrenn Schmidt, Julia Crockett, David Denman **REVIEWED** Episodes 1-6

OUTCAST: SEASON 1

The power of Kirkman compels you

Kyle Barnes has a demon problem. Moving back to his childhood home after being accused of beating his wife, he finds friends in short supply. So when he seeks out the local Reverend – who's in the middle of performing an exorcism – having a possessed child spit "Outcast" at him is probably the last thing he needs.

Kyle's attempts to understand why demons latch onto him forms the basis of this Robert Kirkman comic book adaptation, but thanks to a solid cast and strong writing, there's plenty of intrigue outside of the demon fighting, with the mysteries never feeling drawn out for the sake of it.

It's also a visual treat from the off, with grimy, decrepit places housing brutal exorcisms, where fists and blood replace crosses and holy water. Add on Atticus Ross' industrial score menacingly thundering along in the background and the show creates a thick fog of anxiety that hangs over every conversation and frantic prayer.

While this air of tension makes the show a satisfyingly uneasy watch, it does sometimes falter when we actually see the demons. Formed of a black floating mass that oozes out of broken humans, their surreal appearance lacks the power of the pounding exorcisms and isn't quite the climax you want from these moments. Good job they're used sparsely.

A slight niggles in an otherwise intoxicating blend of engaging conspiracy and squirming dread, making it just as essential as *that* other show Kirkman has a hand in. **BEN TYLER**

RATING ★★★★★



DIR Matteo Garrone **CERT** 15
OUT Now **FROM** Curzon Artificial Eye

TALE OF TALES

A fantastic and fearful fairytale that's won our hearts

Faithfully based on a collection of fairy stories by 17th century Italian poet Giambattista Basile, *Tale Of Tales* is so imaginative it feels like Luchino Visconti has been tricked into shooting an episode of Jim Henson's *The Storyteller*.

We follow a queen who wants a child, a princess who wants a husband, and an insatiable king – all of whom encounter magic, and menace, on their quests. The three main narratives twist together like charmed vines, with the stories' main connective a sense of obsessive love, the kind of passion that leaves marks as dark as a bruise.

Is it scary? These tales contain murderers, ogres, creatures and enough blood to fill a cauldron. The film definitely leans harder on fantasy than horror, but when the scares come, they're intense. One moment feels like it's been pulled straight from *Hellraiser*, another setpiece sequence wouldn't look out of place in a slasher.

The performances are uniformly great, as you'd expect from a cast including Salma Hayek, Vincent Cassel and Toby Jones. That said, the stand-out is Bebe Cave as Princess Violet, who delivers a mesmerising performance, with real range. The whole cast will live happily ever after, but we're excited to see where Bebe's story takes her next. **SAM ASHURST**

EXTRAS Interviews with the director, Hayek and Jones, plus a trailer.

RATING ★★★★★



DIR Various **CERT** 18
OUT Now **FROM** Studiocanal

SOUTHBOUND

Horror anthology that drives you down the highway to hell

Five tales of purgatory-based unpleasantness, *Southbound* is a wickedly grim and confrontational assault. With interlocking stories of characters making catastrophically bad, selfish and fatal choices, the film's brisk 85 minutes is played out with a frenetic pace and a crackling nervous energy that seldom lets up.

The segments are as diverse as you might expect – featuring monsters, Satanism, a home invasion plot and more – yet the film holds both its angular tone and menace admirably. If not always scary, there is a edginess and relish to the action.

The plots bleed smartly into one another, and the omnipresent DJ chuckling malevolently from scene to scene binds together the larger story at play neatly. The cast don't put a foot wrong, either, with Mather Zickel's panic-stricken Lucas and Susan Burke's Betty especially delicious.

In fact, what's most enjoyable about *Southbound* is that it wears its influences on its film print, yet never feels smothered by them. There's a pitiless stench of grindhouse, a Lynchian feel to the piecemeal surrealism and circular logic, and the squelchy synth score feels lifted straight from the '80s VHS era. **MILES HAMER**

EXTRAS Commentary with the filmmakers.

RATING ★★★★★



DIR Abner Pastoll **CERT** TBC
OUT 29 Aug **FROM** FrightFest Presents

ROAD GAMES

Rural suspense thriller with Gallic charm

Rustic charm, centuries old chateaux, and a serial killer on the loose – just your average rural French holiday then. Abner Pastoll's playful thriller begins with British backpacker Jack meeting hitchhiking French drifter Véronique. The two soon find themselves accepting a lift from an eccentric local, who insists they stay the night at his opulent country home.

What unravels is a beguiling tale of mystery and intrigue which never quite settles, biting at the audience with tangible peculiarity.

Road Games is, for the most part, a pleasing patchwork quilt of influences, most heavily in debt to the verisimilitude and dread of *Wolf Creek*, with additional nods to the likes of *Switchblade Romance* and *The Hitcher* (not to mention its Hitchcockian-influenced 1981 namesake). However, the plot drives its own path, albeit one that feels just a little too safe at times. Despite the fist-gnawingly awkward exchanges and disquieting build-up, the menace is ultimately a little overly sparing.

That said, there's fun and punch to the finale, and the whole film is shot beautifully: whether Pastoll is showing off his eye for a loaded shot or simply framing a bale of hay, there's an exquisite lushness to the proceedings. **MILES HAMER**

EXTRAS Outtakes, alternate and deleted scenes, a Making Of and trailers.

RATING ★★★★★

ALIEN 2: ON EARTH

DIR **Ciro Ippolito** **CERT** 18
OUT Now **FROM** 88 Films



Six years before *Aliens*, director *Ciro Ippolito* helmed this unofficial Italian follow-up to Ridley Scott's classic. A deep space mission returns to Earth bringing with it an alien parasite that attacks *Thelma* and her pals when they go spelunking.

Largely shot in the Castellana Caves, *Alien 2* is blessed with strong location footage and some effective gore – but dear god is it slow. Although only 84 minutes long, a good third of it is taken up with long panning shots and people standing around looking worried. On the plus side this is a crisp transfer and the soundtrack by *Oliver Onions* (actually the *De Angelis* brothers) is effectively sunny with just a dash of the uncanny. **WILL SALMON**

EXTRAS *Eli Roth* waxes lyrical about the film; an effects reel; trailers.

RATING



MICROWAVE MASSACRE

DIR **Wayne Berwick** **CERT** 15
OUT Now **FROM** Arrow Video



Peckish? Here's a movie to ruin your appetite. This remastered re-release sees a disgruntled husband killing and eating his wife after an argument over her microwave cooking. Having developed a taste for flesh, he continues killing.

Put like that, it sounds fun. But it isn't. Despite its lean runtime, this is a tough film to get through. It's dull: the characters are stock caricatures, the gore is un inventive, and the humour is seriously undercooked. It's also stupid: the conflation of sex and food could be interesting, but the idea never goes anywhere. Its worst crime, though, is its sexism. The shiny '80s microwave of the title might look dated now, but it's the misogyny here that's really past its sell-by date. **SARAH DOBBS**

EXTRAS A 21-min Making Of, commentary, gallery.

RATING



COUNT YORGA COLLECTION

DIR **Bob Kelljan** **CERT** 15
OUT Now **FROM** Arrow Video



Originally mooted as a softcore horror flick, *Count Yorga, Vampire* eventually arrived as a Californian-accented Hammer pastiche starring *Robert Quarry* as the mysterious Bulgarian bloodsucker. A drive-in success at the time, it eventually spawned a sequel, the superior *The Return of Count Yorga*, which sees *Quarry's* character set his vampiric sights on a local orphanage.

The two films' threadbare budgets are still regrettably evident, and *Quarry* has little star quality, yet these films did beat Hammer in bringing their vampire into the modern day. Good, campy fun, this is a definite curio for vampire nostalgists. **STEVE O'RALEN**

EXTRAS *Kim Newman* presents a tribute to the films, and there's a commentary.

RATING

THE LIVING AND THE DEAD

DIR **Alice Troughton, Sam Donovan** **CERT** 15
OUT Now **FROM** BBC



Colin Morgan (yes, him off of *Merlin*, now all grown up) stars in this handsome six-part BBC ghost story. It's 1894 and psychologist *Nathan Appleby* and his wife *Charlotte* (*Charlotte Spencer*) escape to the country. Of course, this being TV, things don't go smoothly... Enter 16-year-old *Harriet* (*Tallulah Haddon*) a troubled, possibly dangerous girl troubled by mysterious voices. Is she mad? Or could something more demonic be at work here? This looks as lovely as you'd expect, but it takes a while for the series to really get under your skin. It's dreamy and atmospheric, with more than a dash of *MR James* in its DNA, but you'll need patience to get to the intriguing final episode. **WILL SALMON**

EXTRAS A Making Of doc, behind the scenes feature and a piece on fictional village *Shepzoy*.

RATING

THE DEAD NEXT DOOR

DIR **JR Bookwalter** **CERT** 1989
OUT Now **FROM** 88 Films



JR Bookwalter's no-budget horror comedy is a blast from the off. An elite *Zombie Squad* (made up of rather less elite actors) fight zombies, discover a bizarre religious cult and shoot a lot of guns. And that's about it. Oddly enough, it works. Effectively an 84-minute long love letter to zombies, *Dead* comes from a time when naming characters *Romero* was fun and sweet, and not hackneyed and obvious. *Sam Raimi* was pseudonymously involved in the film and *Dead* is clearly a post-*Evil Dead* work – all homespun creature effects and daft gags. It outstays its welcome a little, but it helped pave the way for more sophisticated horror comedies. An instant nostalgia hit for fans of a certain age. **WILL SALMON**

EXTRAS A behind the scenes piece, a feature on the restoration plus outtakes, deleted scenes and trailers.

RATING



THE BOY

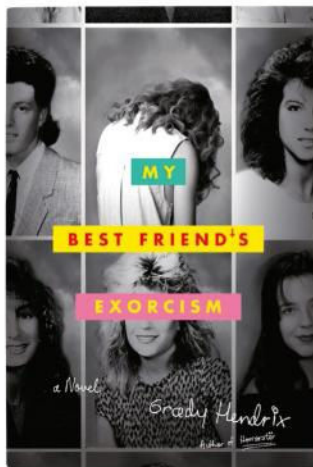
DIR **William Brent Bell** **CERT** 15
OUT Now **FROM** Entertainment In Video



The Walking Dead's *Lauren Cohan* moves from being chased by the undead to being spooked by a doll in this tired – and occasionally comical – chiller. She plays *Greta*, an American nanny in England, hired to look after *Brahms*, the son of seemingly-friendly elderly couple, the *Heelshires*. "Brahms is not like other children," deadpans the dad (*Jim Norton*) at one point: no shit mate, he's made of porcelain. Of course, there's more to this doll than meets the eye. *William Brent Bell's* film offers secondhand scares along the way to a rote finale. And while *Cohan* is fine and *The Boy* does its best to build up a menacing atmosphere, it's too silly to scare anyone but the jumpiest of viewers. **WILL SALMON**

EXTRAS A pair of short featurettes.

RATING



AUTHOR Grady Hendrix
PUBLISHER Quirk Books **OUT** Now

MY BEST FRIEND'S EXORCISM

Mean ghouls

It's not easy being a teenage girl. You've got to deal with hormones, homework, and, in Abby's case, her best friend's demonic possession.

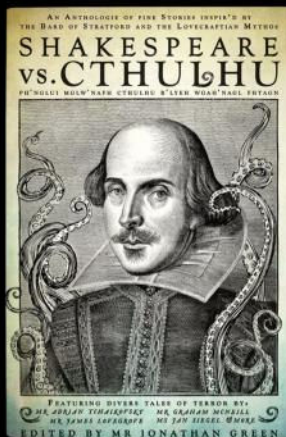
Abby and Gretchen have been BFFs since they were 10 years old, but after one ill-advised late night experiment with hallucinogens, Gretchen changes. First withdrawn and paranoid, then domineering and cruel, Gretchen just isn't herself any more. While no-one else can see it, Abby knows what's going on: Gretchen is possessed.

Set in the late 1980s, *My Best Friend's Exorcism* is packed with pop culture references: its characters bond over *ET*, sing along to Phil Collins, and spend every night talking on Mickey Mouse-shaped telephones. *Horrorstör* author Grady Hendrix captures the atmosphere of an '80s teen movie perfectly, and he also spends plenty of time letting the reader get to know his characters before anything happens.

But though the scares take their time to arrive, they're worth the wait. There's one scene of queasy body horror that'll worm its way straight into your nightmares, and the titular exorcism itself is visceral and horrifying. Even the smaller, more mundane moments of cruelty bite hard, probably because it's easy to believe teenagers really could be that horrible.

Even in its darkest moments, though, there's a humour and warmth to this novel that's oddly comforting. It's a love letter to the past; to adolescence, hairspray, satanic panics, and the cleansing power of friendship. **SARAH DOBBS**

RATING ★★★★★



EDITOR Jonathan Green
PUBLISHER Snowbooks Ltd **OUT** Now

SHAKESPEARE VS CTHULHU

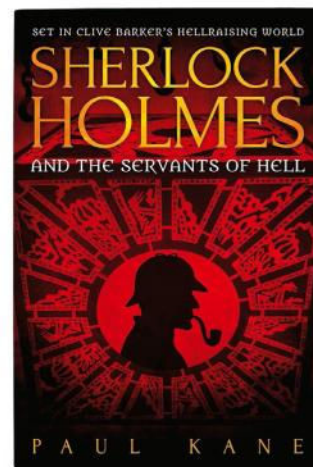
The Great Old One rises again

The 400th anniversary of Shakespeare's death is being commemorated in all sorts of ways, though this volume of stories mashing up the Bard's life and works with HP Lovecraft's Cthulhu mythos might be one of the stranger ones. As editor Jonathan Green notes, "There is a trail of madness and horror that runs through much of Shakespeare's work."

The 15 stories and two sonnets are, as you'd expect, a mixed bunch. The most satisfying stories are the ones not rooted too firmly in specific plays: "A Tiger's Heart, A Player's Hide" by Josh Reynolds sees John Dee investigating the cause of a plague that seems linked to the theatres of London; and "A Reckoning" by Guy Haley has playwright-spy Christopher Marlowe discovering a strange village at the watery edge of the Netherlands. "Something Wicked This Way Comes" by Graham McNeill is the standout, as an actor takes on the role of Macbeth more strongly than he might have intended to. It's a particularly clever story as it's littered with puns and allusions to the play without drawing your attention to them.

Perhaps it's the familiarity of the source material that makes the stories more firmly rooted in plays less successful. Somehow they don't feel as unsettling as weird fiction should – the tales where the monsters take priority are the ones you'll go back to. **MILLIAM McDONALD**

RATING ★★★★★



AUTHOR Paul Kane
PUBLISHER Solaris Books **OUT** Now

SHERLOCK HOLMES AND THE SERVANTS OF HELL

The gore's afoot!

The bold title may misdirect you into thinking this is another cheap horror/lit mash-up, like *Pride And Prejudice And Zombies*, but nothing could be further from this brilliant book.

Indeed, there's no need to eliminate the impossible, because Paul Kane has achieved the improbable and crafted a tale that'll satisfy Sherlock Holmes fans, *Hellraiser* addicts and casual readers alike.

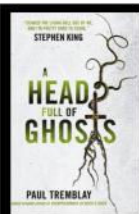
As ever with Holmes' classic tales, the story is told from Watson's perspective, which allows for some beautiful scene-setting, encompassing Holmes' adventures past, present and – thanks to some neat nods to films and TV shows – future. In fact, *Servants* is packed with references, tributes and details from both universes, hidden within a plot that clicks together as perfectly as, well, a puzzle box.

Reading Kane's masterpiece is like discovering an alternate reality in which these worlds have always belonged to each other. Both explore addiction and repression and revolve around fairly intense problem-solving. Holmes is the master of mysteries, so it makes sense he'd be drawn to the ultimate puzzle box. Meanwhile, the Cenobites always had a sense of Victorian morality about them, symbols of sexual restraint unleashed by S&M vibes.

This book is intricate, addictive and often feels like it's twisting itself in your hands. It's also, at times, bloody scary. Our advice? Chuck on your deerstalker, pull out your pipe, and go straight to hell. **SAM ASHLURST**

RATING ★★★★★

**“To date, the
Star Wars saga has only
picked up one Oscar
nod for acting. Name
the nominated thesp!”**

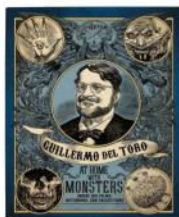


AUTHOR Paul Tremblay
PUBLISHER Titan Books **OUT** 27 September

A HEAD FULL OF GHOSTS

A *Head Full of Ghosts* begins in time-honoured fashion, with 23-year-old Meredith Barrett meeting a writer in her former home. The story she recounts is almost a “greatest hits” of possession tales, but then the narrative changes to a blogger posting about reality TV show, *The Possession*, 15 years on. It’s a neat switch: the tropes are all acknowledged, the story becomes far less familiar, and what starts out as a clichéd possession story becomes a much truer, more awful psychological horror in which a family struggles under the exploitative eyes of a TV crew. In the end, you’re left with a lot of uncertainty as to just whose head the ghosts reside in. **MIRIAM McDONALD**

RATING ★★★★★



AUTHOR Guillermo Del Toro
PUBLISHER Insight Editions **OUT** Now!

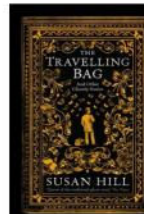
AT HOME WITH MONSTERS

U usually it takes a celebrity to bite the big one before we’re granted a peek inside their lair. Thankfully, Guillermo Del Toro is alive and not all precious about the vast horror collection he’s amassed in his 51 years.

This thrillingly beautiful coffee table book shows off his 700 pieces of art, his wax sculptures, his movie props and his generally gothic taste in home furnishings.

As much a loving essay on Del Toro as a tour round his crib, it’s a fascinating look around the environment that helps spawn his work. This is the home that any self-respecting fan would cultivate if they had the dough, though perhaps most of us would baulk at a life-size waxwork of Ray Harryhausen. **STEVE O'BRIEN**

RATING ★★★★★



AUTHOR Susan Hill
PUBLISHER Profile Books **OUT** 29 September

THE TRAVELLING BAG AND OTHER GHOSTLY STORIES

F our tales of the supernatural from the author of *The Woman In Black*? Oh, go on then. This is a slim volume, but Hill’s work is as compulsive as ever. “The Front Room”, with its vile, home-invading villain, is arguably the only truly frightening story here. Instead, “Boy Number 21” and “Alice Baker” are melancholy tales of dislocated souls, though Hill does capture a truly uncanny tone in the latter, which involves a mysterious new office intern with just a hint of the infernal about her. In comparison, the title story is an entertaining historical tale of revenge, but the least gripping of the four. **WILL SALMON**

RATING ★★★★★

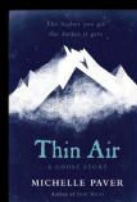


AUTHOR Ezekiel Boone
PUBLISHER Gollancz **OUT** Now!

THE HATCHING

I n the late 1970s and into the 1980s, the “creature swarm” novel was a horror staple. Like the creepy-crawlies in those novels, the genre just can’t be finished off. *The Hatching* has its eight feet firmly planted in the past, featuring flesh-eating arachnids and a clichéd cast including female scientists, a single-father FBI agent, a tech billionaire, the US President and a sprinkling of survivalists. The cast is too large; you don’t really care what happens to most of them, though some are so annoying you wish the spiders would hurry up and eat them. The unforgivable bit, though, is a serious lack of animal action. It fizzles out without delivering any serious scares. Why waste your time? **MIRIAM McDONALD**

RATING ★★★★★



AUTHOR Michelle Paver
PUBLISHER Orion **OUT** 6 October

THIN AIR

C learly hoping to recreate the slow-burn atmosphere of ghost fiction’s greats – notably MR James – *Thin Air* sets itself a pretty tall mountain to climb. And you’d better be interested in mountain-climbing in the 1930s, as that accounts for 90 per cent of *Thin Air*. Paver’s in-depth research is admirable if dull. It feels like we’re following medic Stephen Pearce in real-time as he climbs Kangchenjunga, bickering with his brother and having a series of increasingly chilling encounters along the way. The problem is, it’s so slow-paced, with such unlikeable leads, you may feel you’ve embarked on your own impossible journey trying to reach the last page. **SAM ASHURST**

RATING ★★★★★



AUTHOR Adam L.G. Nevill
PUBLISHER Ritual Books **OUT** September

SOME WILL NOT SLEEP

A dam Nevill’s first anthology collects 11 seldom-seen tales from across his career and finds the author experimenting with different styles. Some stories, like the Scandinavian-set “The Original Occupant” may feel familiar to fans – it’s a clear ancestor of his novel, *The Ritual*, albeit written in a more mannered style. Others, like “The Ancestors”, with its hints of J-horror are intriguingly different. The opening and closing tales, “Where Angels Come In” and “Florrie” are highlights. Both concern haunted houses and the former is particularly nightmarish thanks to its vivid and skin-crawling elderly spectres, while the latter is more grounded in the everyday, but just as claustrophobic. **WILL SALMON**

RATING ★★★★★

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Sam Ashurst
bravely suggests a
reappraisal of Rob
Zombie's unloved
sequel...



IN DEFENCE OF... HALLOWEEN II (2009)

Halloween II isn't just unfairly maligned, it's one of the towering greats of modern horror cinema – no, really. In my opinion it's as smart, scary and subversive as the original *Psycho*. Not only that, but it plays with some of the same arthouse-meets-grindhouse concepts Bryan Fuller's *Hannibal* is so celebrated for, only it got there first.

Sure, *Halloween II* opens with a potentially pretentious quote about white horses being psychologically symbolic of emotional rage, and a white horse appears in a series of heavily stylised sequences throughout the film. But is *Halloween II*'s horse so different to Bryan Fuller's black stag in *Hannibal*? Both represent the lead character's subconscious states.

In *Hannibal*, Will Graham's brain is trying to tell him that Hannibal is dangerous. In *Halloween II*, Laurie's genetic propensity

towards evil is simmering underneath her PTSD, waiting to consume her.

Both projects use dream sequences, though I'd argue *Halloween*'s is the more intense/valid. Not only does it contain one of the most brutal setpieces in horror cinema – sleazy, squalid and sick – it has a point beyond the usual jump-scare delivery service.

Halloween II's opening dream sequence is an expression of Laurie's trauma following the events of the first film. It's also a genius method of nodding to Carpenter's original sequel (both happen in hospitals) whilst allowing Zombie to follow his own path completely once Laurie wakes up and the film (more clearly) becomes an exploration of the traumatic consequences of surviving a slasher-flick. This transition from the dream world to the real world is as brave as *Psycho*'s shower scene, turning what we're watching into a completely different experience.

This "final girl" is a wreck, partying to try and forget her past, dragged down by her demons. She argues with her best friend (another Michael Myers survivor), a friend who appears unable to leave the house (we certainly never see her out of it, and it's where she's brutally dismembered).

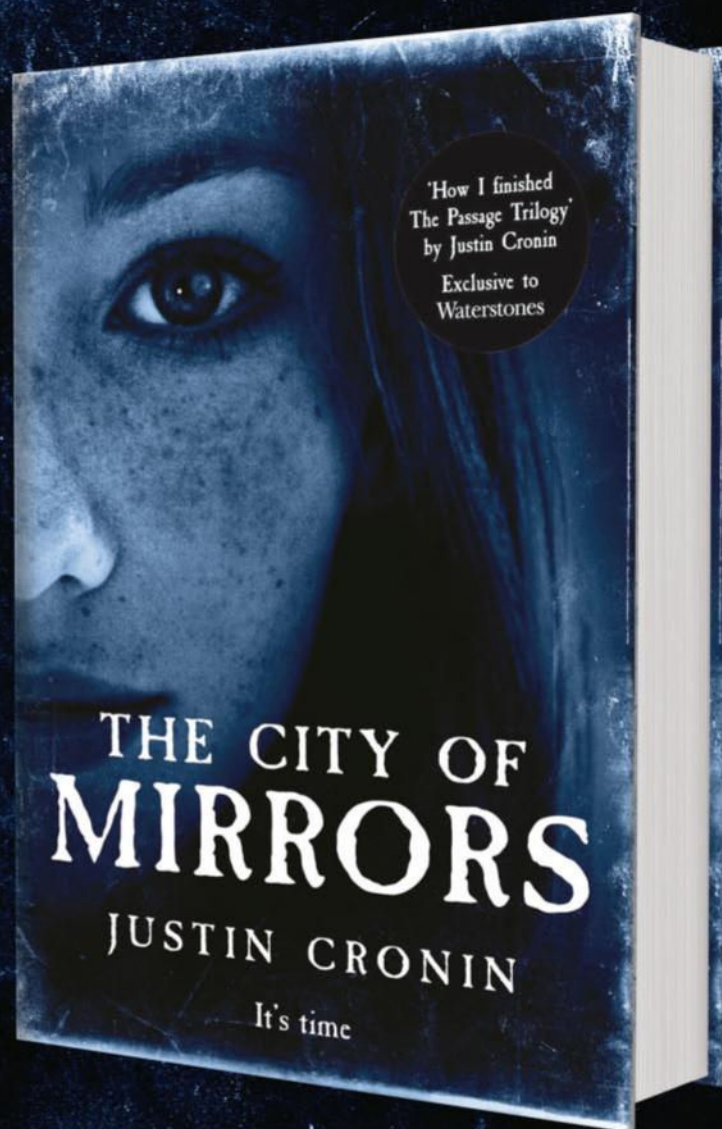
Halloween II is a sequel that lives with the first film's consequences in a way that we've never seen in a slasher film before.

And Myers isn't just an entity, chasing Laurie to spill her blood. The revelation they're related (also cribbed from the original sequel), means he's a part of her – and, no matter how fast you run, you can't escape the slow-pursuit of genetics.

Laurie's eventual evolution from victim to killer, coupled with a stark final shot, seemed jarring for some audiences, but the film's subtle symbolism earns its pay-off, and my eternal respect. ▮



It's time.



16.06.16

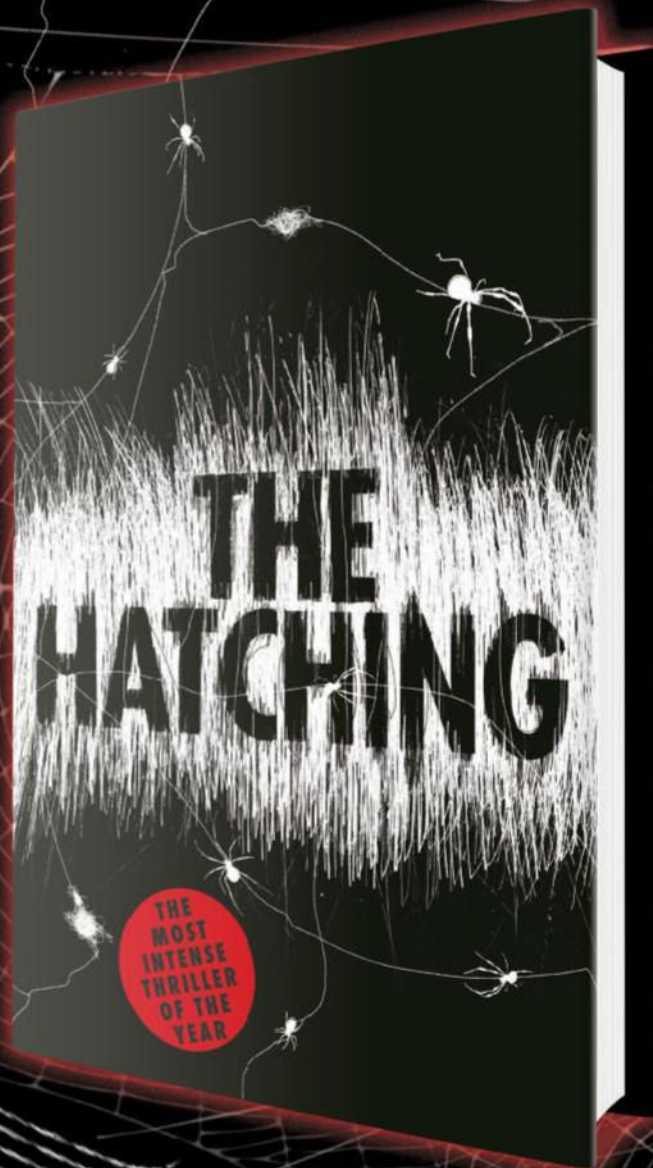
'One of the great achievements in American fantasy fiction' – Stephen King

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